RAIMON PANIKKAR

MYSTERY AND HERMENEUTICS

PART TWO
Faith, Hermeneutics, and Word

Opera Omnia

Volume IX
Mystery and Hermeneutics

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Faith, Hermeneutics, and Word

Opera Omnia

ORBIS ✪ BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

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Series Foreword

All the writings it is my privilege and responsibility to present in this series are not the fruit of mere speculation but, rather, autobiographical—that is, they were first inspired by a life and praxis that have been only subsequently molded into writing.

This *Opera Omnia* ranges over a span of some seventy years, during which I dedicated myself to exploring further the meaning of a more justified and fulfilled human lifetime. I did not live for the sake of writing, but I wrote to live in a more conscious way so as to help my fellows with thoughts not only from my own mind but also springing from a superior Source, which may perhaps be called Spirit—although I do not claim that my writings are in any way inspired. However, I do not believe that we are isolated monads, but that each of us is a microcosm that mirrors and impacts the macrocosm of reality as a whole—as most cultures believed when they spoke of the Body of Śiva, the communion of the saints, the Mystical Body, *karman*, and so forth.

The decision to publish this collection of my writings has been somewhat trying, and more than once I have had to overcome the temptation to abandon the attempt, the reason being that, though I fully subscribe to the Latin saying *scripta manent*, I also firmly believe that what actually matters in the final analysis is to live our Life, as witnessed by the great masters who, as Thomas Aquinas remarks in the *Summa* about Pythagoras and Socrates (but not about Buddha, of whom he could not have known), did not write a single word.

In the twilight of life I found myself in a dark forest, for the straight path had been lost and I had shed all my certainties. It is undoubtedly to the merit of Sante Bagnoli, and of his publishing house Jaca Book, that I owe the initiative of bringing out this *Opera Omnia*, and all my gratitude goes to him. This work includes practically all that has appeared in book form, although some chapters have been inserted into different volumes as befitted their topics. Numerous articles have been added to present a more complete picture of my way of thinking, but occasional pieces and almost all my interviews have been left out.

I would like to make some practical comments which apply to all the volumes:

1. In quoting references, I have preferred to cite my previously published works following the general scheme of my publications.

2. Subject matter rather than chronology has been considered in the selection, and thus the style may sometimes appear uneven.

3. Even if each of these works aspires to be a self-sufficient whole, some ideas recur because they are functional to understanding the text, although the avoidance of unnecessary duplication has led to a number of omissions.

4. The publisher's preference for the *Opera Omnia* to be put into an organic whole by the author while still alive has many obvious positive features. Should the author outlive the printer's run, however, he will be hard put to help himself from introducing alterations, revisions, or merely adding to his original written works.

CONTENTS

SECTION II: HERMENEUTICS

Abbreviations

Hindū Scriptures

AV	*Atharva-veda*
BG	*Bhagavad-gītā*
BU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*
CU	*Chādogya-upaniṣad*
KathU	*Kaṭha-upaniṣad*
KenU	*Kena-upaniṣad*
MaitU	*Maitrī-upaniṣad*
RV	*Ṛg-veda*
SB	*Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*
TB	*Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa*
YS	*Yoga-sūtra of* Patañjali

Christian Scriptures

Gen	*Genesis*
Judg	*Judges*
2 Chr	*Second Chronicles*
Ps	*Psalms*
Eccles	*Ecclesiastes*
Is	*Isaiah*
Dan	*Daniel*
Mt	*Matthew*
Mk	*Mark*
Lk	*Luke*
Jn	*John*
Rom	*Romans*
1 Cor	*First Corinthians*
2 Cor	*Second Corinthians*
Gal	*Galatians*
Eph	*Ephesians*
Phil	*Philippians*
Col	*Colossians*
1 Tim	*First Timothy*
Heb	*Hebrews*

Jas	*James*
2 Pet	*Second Peter*
1 Jn	*First John*
Rev	*Revelation*
Wis	*Wisdom of Solomon*

Others

AV	*Authorized Version*
Denz.-Schön.	*H. J. D. Denzinger, Enchiridion symbolarum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, A. Schönmetzer (ed.), Barcinone: Herder, 1973*
Diels-Kranz.	*H. Diels, W. Krantz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, I–III, Weidmann, Berlin-Zürich-Hildesheim, 1951–1952*
LXX	*Septuagint*
NEB	*New English Bible*
PG	*J.-P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, Paris 1857–66*
PL	*J.-P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, Paris, 1844–55*
RSV	*Revised Standard Version*
RV	*Revised Version*
Vg.	*Vulgat*

Introduction

While the first part of Volume IX, *Mystery and Hermeneutics*, dealt with myth, symbol, and cult—three forms by which the human being opens up to the mystery of reality—this second book is dedicated to faith, hermeneutics, and the word, terms that describe this opening up.

Faith

Faith is understood as that dimension in Man that corresponds to myth. Man is open to an ever-widening horizon of awareness, a horizon that is present in myth. Faith is taken to be the vehicle by which human consciousness passes from *mythos* to *logos*, in that all faith is expressed in beliefs. Faith manifests the myth in which we believe, without "believing" that we believe in it. To believe is not to hold a belief as one holds an object of knowledge; it is simply the act of believing. To believe is not to hold a belief as one holds an object of knowledge; it is simply the act of believing. The first case makes discourse about belief possible and gives us an awareness of the results of believing. The second one either self-destructs as rational reflection, because it does not understand its contents, or if it does, destroys faith by converting it into knowledge. This is what the Latin Middle Ages called the incompatibility between the *cognitum* and the *creditum*—between what is known and what is believed. We know *that* we believe (the first case) but we do not know *what* we believe (the second case), which is why we believe and do not know. In other words, faith that expresses itself in belief has no object, it is not an *objectum* of our mind. Thomas Aquinas, in the second part of his *Summa Theologiae*, formulating a common Christian conviction, said: *Actus autem credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabilem sed ad rem* (The act of the believer does not end at the formulation, but in the thing itself)—in reality itself. Reality here is the ever-inexhaustible Mystery, beyond the reach of objective knowledge.

"I believe in God," for example, is a cognitive statement when it stands for the expression of the act of believing (the first case) but we do not know *what* God is—that is, when I do not *know* God as the object of my belief (the second case). If I am asked whether I believe in God I cannot properly respond, as I do not know what is meant by "God" and so cannot answer whether I believe in this "God." Any question about God either self-destructs because it does not know *what* it is asking or dissolves the God we are asking about into something that is no longer God, but a mere idol. The God of faith is a symbol, not a concept.

Hermeneutics

The fact that the believed is not the known does not subordinate the one to the other, but it relates knowledge and belief as different forms of consciousness without allowing the reduction of awareness to mere knowing (of objects) or to mere believing (in myths). From this fact there emerges an image of Man that cannot be limited only to *logos* or to *mythos*.

And yet there are many things that need interpretation. Man does not live by symbols alone—hence, the second part of this book. Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation, of providing sense, of making meaning, of restoring symbols to life and in the end letting new symbols emerge. Hermeneutics is the method of overcoming the distance between a knowing subject and an object to be known, once the two have been separated. Hermes is the messenger of the Gods but only outside Olympus.

Now we can distinguish a threefold hermeneutics, or rather three kairological moments in the hermeneutical enterprise, three intertwined ways of overcoming the epistemological distance and thus human isolation.

Morphological hermeneutics entails the explanation or clarification done by, say, parents, teachers, elders, or wiser people for the benefit of those who have not yet had full access to the valuable meaning of a particular culture. It is the reading of the text. Morphological hermeneutics is the homogeneous unveiling of implicit or de facto unknown elements. Here the great method is logic. It starts with what is implicit (which is present in the "wise") and moves toward the present. It proceeds by way of comparison—and all the other rules of correct reasoning.

Diachronical hermeneutics refers to the knowledge of the context necessary in order to understand a text, because the temporal gap between the understander and what is to be understood has obscured or even changed the meaning of the original datum. Diachronical hermeneutics also deals with the problems of ideology and time. It takes the temporal factor as an intrinsic element in the process of understanding. Its method is fundamentally historical. Action and involvement are its basic constituents. This means moving away from our own "position" in order to enter into another worldview. This is the proper place for dialectics: the movement here is from present to past so as to incorporate it, include it in a wider category, or cancel it. Diachronical hermeneutics is not the youngster learning about the past from contemporaries. It is the adult firmly rooted in his present degree of awareness, trying to enrich himself by understanding the past.

There is, however, a third moment in any complete hermeneutical process, and the fact that it has often been neglected or overlooked has been a major cause of misunderstandings among the different cultures of the world. I call it *diatopical* hermeneutics because the gap to be bridged is not merely temporal, within one broad tradition, but is the distance between two human *topoi,* "places" of understanding and self-understanding—between two, or more, cultures that have not developed their patterns of intelligibility or their basic assumptions via a common historical tradition or through mutual influence. To cross the frontier of one's own culture without realizing that another culture may have a radically different approach to reality is today no longer admissible. Diatopical hermeneutics starts from the thematic consideration that we need to understand the other without assuming that the other has the same basic self-understanding and understanding as we have. At stake here is the ultimate human horizon, and not just different contexts. The method in this third moment is a particular *dialogical dialogue,* the *dia-logos* piercing the *logos* in order to reach that dialogical, translogical realm of the heart (according to most traditions), allowing for the emergence of a myth in which we may be in communion, and which will ultimately lead to understanding—sharing the same horizon of intelligibility.

Diatopical hermeneutics aspires to know the *pretext* as well as the text and the context. It is not objectifiable, because it considers the other an equally original source of knowledge. In other words, man's self-knowledge concerns not only what man thinks of himself, but also what man is. In order to understand what man is, we need a method fundamentally different from the "scientific" approach, because what man understands himself to be is also part of

his being. In fact, understanding the different forms of self-understanding among men is a central problem of diatopical hermeneutics. Here we shall use diatopical hermeneutics without a systematic study of its theory.

I have already mentioned the importance and also the limits of hermeneutics. Man does not live either by bread alone or by word alone. Myth and faith challenge hermeneutics, but without hermeneutics myth and faith would perish in the moment when the innocence of the ecstatic state ends. Yet it remains true not only that man alone can interpret but also that interpretation is inbuilt in Man's very nature. Not only does Man's self-interpretation belong to what Man is, but Man's interpretation of the World also belongs, in a way, to what the world is. This is why our search here is constitutively open, incomplete, unfinished, not finite and not infinite.

Word

A language is more than a tool; it is a body, a part of oneself, a part that in a way stands for the whole, a *pars pro toto*. A language is a way of looking at, and indeed of being in, the world. This is exactly the characteristic feature of the word: to be the image, the *eikon*, the expression and manifestation of the totality, the firstborn of God, in accordance with Hindu, Christian, and other sacred Scriptures. But here the singular is fundamental. The many words do not substitute the word meant as incarnation of Spirit. We have to speak a language, and in a sense this language also has to be the regional dialect of the community to which we belong. Only a dialect is full of life, vivid, and able to express what no contrived idiom, however essential, can ever express. The poets know this. Nonetheless, our present-day forms of dialect can no longer afford to be the slang of a select group or the mere repetition of clichés. Our dialect must integrate in itself the experience of other worldviews. Yet we cannot pour all of human experience into a language, not because the poet lacks the skill, but because the enterprise is self-defeating.

The first section is centered on faith and its nature. It seeks to challenge the monopolization of faith due to an overly narrow interpretation. Only the symbolic character of words and their use in a mythical sense can break the tendency of our reason to assume a monopoly on the meaning of words.

The second section of the book seeks to apply hermeneutics to some present-day problems in today's encounter between religions and in the confrontation of various worldviews. The aim here is to integrate the interpretations, dictated by the contemporary situation of so-called fundamental theology. From this hermeneutical point of view, an example is examined from within the Christian religion. The last chapter analyzes an important aspect of each religion, which seems to be inexplicably neglected. Secularization and religion certainly find a meeting point in underlining the importance not only of liberation but of liberty.

The third section includes the book *The Spirit of the Word*, composed of four texts that take on the theme of the relationship among Man, Reality, and Word, each essay offering a different perspective. They were published at different times and in different cultural contexts from India to Catalonia. They analyze the issue in a stimulating and concise way from philosophical, religious, and scientific points of view, bringing together into a single spiritual and intellectual experience the insights of Western and Eastern thought, and in particular the thought of India as well as philosophy and Western Christianity. There then follow three articles on the philosophy of language.

SECTION I

FAITH

1

FAITH AS A CONSTITUTIVE
HUMAN DIMENSION

και εαν μη πιστευσετε
ουδε μη συνητε

If you do not believe,
you will not exist.

Is 7:9*

I am deeply aware of the responsibility as well as the risk and incongruity of breaking silence of what is lived and contemplated only in silence: faith and myth, both sucklings of silence.

When celebrating the mystery of the *logos* made flesh during Christmas, the Christian liturgy chants: *Dum medium silentium tenerent omnia* (for while gentle silence enveloped all things).[1] To speak of faith translates it into belief; the original vanishes, but only for a little while. Myth is myth because it is μυειν and not λεγειν—mute and not speaking.

Having broken the silence, I only wish to be able to reenter it afresh, this time perhaps not alone. . . .[2]

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* Before commenting on the text, I will give some of its most common translations: "Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis" (LXX, the version generally employed by medieval theologians); "si non credideritis, non permanebitis" (Vulgate); "Vosotros, si no tuviereis fe, no permaneceréis" (Naear-Colunga); "si no creeis, no podreis subsistir" (Martin Nieto); "se non avrete fede, non starete saldi" (Istituto Biblico); "se non crederete, non resterete saldi" (Nardoni); "Mais si vous ne tenez et moi, vous ne tiendrez pas" (*Bible de Jerusalem*, but in a note: "si vous ne croyez pas"); "Gläubt ihr nicht, so bleibt ihr nicht" (Luther); "If you lose courage, your cause is lost" (Knox); "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (AV and RV; RSV changes only *ye* for *you*); "Have firm faith, or you will not stand firm" (NEB).

[1] From the Latin liturgy of the Sunday after Christmas, applying the text of Wis 18:14-15 (referring to the first Passover) to the incarnation of Christ (cf. Jn 1:1-18, though the text is closer to Rev 19:13).

[2] I have kept this spoken introduction of my original French lecture because I feel that it equally applies to the written word—though some of its connotations apply to the colloquium, the title of the meeting had been suggested to me the previous year, many of the participants were "unbelievers" in any "religious faith," it was after Christmas, etc.) may no longer "speak" to the reader. Nevertheless it is only by carrying the others along that one is both stopped in his journey and helped to carry fellow pilgrims on their way.

3

The State of the Problem

The quintessence of faith reflects that aspect of Man that propels him toward fullness, that dimension in which Man is not imprisoned in his current state but open to perfection, to his purpose or destiny, according to the scheme he has adopted. Essentially, faith is not adherence to a doctrine or ethics, but is expressed as an act that opens up to us the possibility of perfection, of becoming what we are not yet.

Crede ut intelligas[3]

"Without faith you cannot exist": In this way I interpret this key passage in traditional Christian theological speculation.[4] The Hebrew wordplay is significant: "if you do not believe," *ta'aminu*, "you will not exist," *te'amenu' Aman* (cf. *amen, emet*), is one of the two expressions for faith. If on the one hand *betah (batah)* brings out the aspect of confidence, *emet (aman)* on the other indicates firmness, solidity, subsistence, and consequently consistence.[5] Thus faith appears as the real foundation for human existence.[7]

Contemporary human experience—followed, not always without delay, by theologians—clearly shows that Man, when deprived of faith, does not know how to bear the weight of an existence torn by internal struggles, nor can he sustain the continual demand to surmount the tensions created by communal life. Deprived of faith, Man collapses. From a phenomenological point of view, one could say that Man is a being "designed" to function in the realm of faith: whoever alienates himself from this sphere ends up destroying himself.

Such an anthropology is plausible not only phenomenologically but also within traditional theology. If on the one hand Man depends on God—and this dependence belongs to the so-called supernatural order presupposed by faith—and if, on the other hand, Man is through and through a rational animal whose being is a conscious being, he can only be founded in truth—and ultimately *be—if*, in some way or other, he can see, intuit, comprehend, believe

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[3] "Believe so that you may understand" was a commonplace saying for at least half of the twenty centuries of Christian history.

[4] For over a thousand years in the West and *mutatis mutandis* also in the East, the central philosophical problem has been that of clarifying the relationship between "faith" and "reason."

[5] Cf. 2 Chr 20:20 with the same play on words: "trust (*haaminu*) in the Lord your God and you will remain *entrusted* (*ta'amenu*)." The LXX says, episteusate εν Κυριω θεω hmwv, kat episteuqhsesqε. The Vg.: "Credite in Domino Deo vestro, et securi eritis." The NEB: "Hold firmly to your faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld."

[6] Cf. Qur'an 47 *passim*, where *âmanû* (verbal form of *mu'min*, the believer), "those who have faith" (*îmân*) play an important role in Islam.

[7] For the Hebrew, cf. L. Bouyer, *Dictionnaire théologique* (Tournai: Desclée, 1966), v. "foi": G. Hebert, "Faithful and 'Faith,'" *Theology* 58, no. 424 (October 1955): 373–79. For an interesting discussion of the Hebrew concept of faith, cf. T. F. Torrance, "One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith," *Expository Times* 58 (1956/1957): 111–14, reprinted in his book *Conflict and Agreement in the Church* (London: Lutterworth, 1959–60), 2:74–82. A very severe critical judgment is found in chapter 7 ("'Faith' and 'Truth': An Examination of Some Linguistic Arguments"), of J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 161–205. Barr does not think such concepts as "faith" and "to create" are used only of God, not of Men. Further he thinks the so-called fundamental concept of "firmness and stability" suffices to explain the Hebrew notion of faith. See also the important article in Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch des Neuen Testaments, s.v.*, and Jepsen's article *'aman* in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 1:313–48.

that his existential situation has a foundation that is not (yet?) himself.[8] Without this awareness his existence is mutilated. A plant lives as long as sap runs in its stalk; Man needs that ontic sap, which gives him his being, and runs up to his head and heart. Any "theology" uses similar arguments. Hindus and Buddhists would say empirical Man is not his own foundation. Faith is precisely that *x* in Man that makes possible the "recognition" of the foundation, for by it Man is united (at least intentionally) to this foundation. A human being cannot attain his destiny if he does not "recognize" the foundation of his being. Now faith is precisely what manifests this foundation. Without faith Man cannot live an authentic human life.

A passage from the *Bhagavad-gītā* seems to express what I wish to say. Just as there are three kinds of Man according to classical Indic anthropology, there are three types of faith, one corresponding to each of these fundamental human types. "Man is made by faith: As the faith so the Man."[9] Without now investigating the notion of *śraddhā*[10] (faith)—which originally signified the theandric condition essential to the efficacy of the sacrifice—it can be said that our thesis is in harmony with the spirit of the Indic religions[11] and in general with every religion.[12]

Yet I may go further: The medieval Christian said, *Credo ut intelligas*.[13] By this expression he did not wish to indicate just the ontological priority of faith with respect to reason, that is, the existential situation in which Man cannot understand if he does not believe. Rather he suspected something more, and it is this intuition I wish to clarify in this study.[14]

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[8] He can lean on *betah*, if he allows himself to be guided by *emunah*.

[9] *BG* XVII.3; cf. also IV.39; XVII.17; etc.

[10] Cf. *BU* III.9.21. Cf. K. L. Seshagiri Rao, *The Concept of Śraddhā* (Delhi: M. Banarsidass, 1971 [1974]), and P. Hacker, "*Śraddhā*," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens / Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 7 (1963).

[11] Cf. the little-known text of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda: "Faith envelops the Gods, faith envelops the entire universe. For this offering I am augmenting this faith, mother of desires" (*TB* II.8.8.8). Or again the entire chapter 6 of the Tripurā-rahasya dedicated to faith: "Faith is the ultimate resort of the whole world.... Everyone is able to communicate with the other because he believes the other.... Faith is the way to attain the ultimate good." Cf. A. V. Vasavada translation (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, vol. L, 1965).

[12] Cf. G. Widengren, "Mythe et foi à la lumière de la phenomènologie religieuse," in *Mythe et Foi*, ed. E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1966), 315–32.

[13] Cf. Th. Heitz, *Essai historique sur les rapports entre la philosophie et la foi: de Berenger de Tours a Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Gabalda, 1909); E. Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Scribner's, 1954).

[14] Cf. some characteristic texts: Aristotle: "Whoever wishes to understand must believe" (*Adv. Soph.* 11.2: 165b2 [although one could translate: "he who wants to learn has to trust," later tradition has interpreted it in the former sense]); St. Leo: "Nisi fides credat, sermo non explicat" [Faith believeth, but words cannot explain] (*Sermo* 29.1; PL 54.226); St. Augustine: "Crede ut intelligas: praecedet fides, sequitur intellectus" [Believe so that you may understand; faith precedes understanding] (*Sermo* 118.1; *Opuscula*, 6.498); "Intellectui fides aditum aperit, infidelitas clausit" [Faith opens the ear to understanding; disbelief closes it] (*Sermo* 137.15); "Intelligere vis? Crede ... Intellectus enim merces est fidei. Ergo noli quaerere, intelligere ut credas, sed crede ut intelligas" [Do you wish to understand? Believe ... Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand] (*In Ioan. Tract.* 29.16, *Opuscula* 6.498); "sic credite ut mereamini intelligere: fides enim debet praecedere intellectum ut sit intellectus fidei praemium" [Believe that you may be worthy of understanding: for faith must precede understanding if understanding is to be the reward for faith] (*Sermo* 139; *Opuscula* 6.498); "Ergo intellige ut credas, crede ut intelligas" [Therefore you must understand in order to believe, and believe in order to understand] (*Epist.* 120.I.3, PL 33.453-

Crede ut sis[15]

I dare to say, "Believe in order that you may be." Faith is necessary not only in order to understand but also to reach full humanity, to be. In other words, faith is a constitutive human dimension. By faith Man is *distinguished* from other beings. But precisely because of this, faith is a human characteristic that *unites* mankind. Thus faith is not the privilege of some individuals or the monopoly of certain defined groups, however large their membership. Faith is not a superfluous luxury, but an anthropological dimension of the full human being on earth.[16]

Our thesis maintains that if creatureliness can be said to be simple *relation* to God, to the Source or whatever name we give the foundation of beings, faith is another name for the *ontological relation* to this absolute that characterizes Man, distinguishing him from all other beings. If beings as such are nothing but this relation (the creature neither is nor has its

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454); "Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitaverit esse credendum" [No one believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed] (*De praed. sanct.* 2.5; PL 44.962–63); "Quanquam et ipsum credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare. Non enim omnis qui cogitat credit; cum ideo cogitent plerique non credant: sed cogitat omnis qui credit, et credendo cogitat, et cogitando credit. . . . Fides, si non cogitetur, nulla est" [Moreover, belief itself is none other than thinking with assent. Indeed not every thinker believes. Many, in fact, think and do not believe. But everyone who believes, thinks, and in believing, thinks, and in thinking, believes . . . Faith that is not thought is nothing] (*De praed. sanct.* 2.5, PL 44.963); "sed ego quid sciam quaero, non quid credam. Omne autem quod scimus, recte fortasse etiam credere dicimur; at non omne quod credimus, etiam scire" [But I at least am seeking what I may know, not what I may believe. Now everything that we know, we may with reason perhaps be said to believe; but not to know everything which we believe] (*Solil.* 1.3.8); "Credimus ut cognoscamus, non cognoscimus ut credamus" [We believe so that we may understand, we do not seek to understand so that we may believe] (*In Ioan. Tract.* 40.9); cf. etiam *Sermo* 43.7.9; *De Trinitate* 7.5.5; etc.; Peter Lombard: "Unde colligitur non posse sciri et intelligi credenda quaedam, nisi prius credantur; et quaedam non credi, nisi prius intelligantur, et ipsa per fidem amplius intelligi. Nec ea quae prius creduntur quam intelligantur, penitus ignorantur, cum fides sit ex auditu. Ignorantur tamen ex parte quia non sciuntur" [Hence we conclude that it is not possible to know and understand the things that are to be believed if we do not first believe them; and some things cannot be believed if they are not first understood, and the same things through faith can be understood better. And it is not that one is ignorant of the things in which one believes before understanding them, because faith comes from listening. One is partly ignorant of them, however, in that one does not know them] (*Sent.* 24.3; PL 192, 809); S. Anselm: "Necque enim quaero intelligere, ut credam, sed credo, ut intelligam" [Neither, in fact, do I seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe, that I may understand] (*Proslogion* 1, PL 158.227); Thomas Aquinas: "Et inde est quod Augustinus dicit" [And it is therefore as Augustine says] (*Super Ioan* 17.7, PL 35.1618), "quod per fidem venitur ad cognitionem, et non e converso" [that through faith one may come to understanding, and not vice versa] (*Sum. theol.*, I, q. 32, a. 1 ad 2); "Fides est in nobis ut perveniamus ad intelligendum quae credimus" [Faith is in us so that we may come to understand what we believe in] (*In Boeth. de Trinitate*, q. 11, a. 2 ad 7); Hugh of St. Victor: "Ideo enim credimus, ut aliquando sciamus" [To this end we believe, that one day we may come to know] (*Summ. Sent.*, tract. I.I; PL 176.43); "Credimus ut cognoscamus; non cognoscimus, ut credamus" [We believe so that we may know; we do not know so that we may believe] (ibid., I.2; PL 176.44); and also in the *Imitatio Christi*: "Omnis ratio et naturalis investigatio fidem sequi debet, non praecedere" [All reasoning and natural inquiry should follow faith, not precede it] (4.18.5).

[15] "Believe so that you may be." I am not using this sentence only in a post-Cartesian way: "Credo ergo sum," as a Ferdinand Ebner would do. Cf. his collected works, *Fragmente, Aufsätze, Aphorismen* (München: Kosel, 1963), 481, 486, 495, 558.

[16] It is worth pointing out in this context the traditional idea that loss of faith is, in a certain sense, *contra naturam*. (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q. 10, a. 1 ad 1.)

foundation in itself), Man is that unique being whose rapport with the foundation becomes the *ontological link* that constitutes him as Man.

In saying "relation" to "God," I am not assuming a kind of merely "private" link with an exclusivistic and anthropomorphic God, but the constitutive radical relativity of all things, so that this link is not a solitary "relation" to an only transcendent "God" but a relation of solidarity with the whole of Reality. The traditional way of expressing this view would be to say that the "theological virtues" are also *cosmological* ones, or in a word, *cosmotheandric*. Faith, hope, and love are not only vertical, but also horizontal.[17]

If religion (from *religare*) is what binds Man to his foundation, faith is what frees him from mere cosmic existence, from being simply a thing. Freedom arises in this opening to or rupture from his subjection to the realm of objects.[18] By his freedom Man is placed at the heart of the personal Trinitarian relation. The relation between God and Man can in no way be free unless there is freedom within the Godhead itself and Man is somehow integrated into that intradivine free-play. This is what the idea of the Trinity, in any of its forms, is saying.[19]

It seems to me unnecessary, but it may be important to add that this thesis, although expressed in a particular language, need not be linked to a single philosophy or religious tradition. It claims to be as valid for a Buddhist as for one who calls himself an atheist. The meaning of words depends not simply upon the semantic expression, but also upon a whole collection of cultural connections that should not obscure our central theme or turn us aside from it. On the other hand, I may be excused from not undertaking excursions into other cultural worlds and not utilizing other frames of reference. All terminology is just the concrete objectification of a cultural system. A discourse in totally abstract terms, that is, lacking any cultural connections or reference, is impossible. The reader may find it easier to understand what I am saying if he translates my words into those of his own personal frame of reference. I hope it will become clearer as we proceed.

The Consequences

This thesis has important consequences. If it is true, it provides the key to one of the most important problems of our time: the encounter of religions. In other words, it delivers us from the impasse in which the science of religions currently finds itself. It suggests the astonishing possibility that the encounter of religions might be a religious dialogue—even at the level of faith—rather than a mere rational dispute. It may also serve to free religion from its exclusivistic aspects, its frequent sectarian character, and from an archaic unilateralism incompatible with the process of universalization in which humanity is engaged. Recognizing faith as an anthropological dimension situates the encounter between people on a fully human plane and does not exclude religion from the dialogue.[20] In a human encounter worthy of the

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[17] Cf. my contribution to the Theological Congress of the Eucharistic Congress of Bombay in 1964, "The Relation of Christians to Their Non-Christian Surroundings," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, ed. J. Neuner (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 143–84; republished in "Christians and So-called 'Non-Christians,'" *Cross Currents* 21, no. 3 (1972): 281–308.

[18] Cf. chapter 6.

[19] Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), esp. 40ff.

[20] The religious encounter, we have said time and again, is neither a private meeting of isolated individuals nor a meeting of abstract generalities, but the concrete meeting in time and space, among living persons, each of whom carries in a more or less complete and conscious way the burden of an entire tradition.

name, it is not enough that Men recognize their brotherhood in shared biological functions or elemental needs while raising barriers when it is a question of a deeper embrace.

One cannot put faith in parentheses any more than one can bracket reason when truly human understanding is at stake, unless one would castrate Man and render him not only infertile but monstrous.[21] Faith is the foundation and guarantee of human relations. Banishing it would inevitably condemn us to solipsism by destroying the last possible foundation for a path to any transcendence, beginning with that transcendence that allows Man to "go out" of himself and meet his fellow-being without alienation.

Understood in this way, faith is also a condition for love and guarantees its creativity. Faith cannot be ignored in considering the deepest realities of human life; it is part of a fully human existence on earth. Every profound human encounter in which faith is left to one side can only appear hypocritical to someone who does not think he has faith, for in such a meeting, the so-called nonbeliever does not meet the believer on the same level if the latter has bracketed his faith; what is ultimate and definitive for the first is only penultimate and provisional for the second. And vice versa: for the Man of faith, there is no real encounter because by putting his faith in parentheses he shuts away precisely what the "nonbeliever" would like to put on the table.

Further, we can suggest that in and by faith the believer "communicates" and fraternizes with the Man who calls himself a nonbeliever. Removed from this deep level of faith, human fraternity becomes an infrahuman communication of the biological order or even an artificial contact, like a computer that always gives the same results when fed the same data. Reason does not get us out of this situation, because it divides, decides, and distinguishes, but does not unite.

For several centuries, Western Man has been indoctrinated that his humanity (and consequently his universality) is grounded in reason. The effort to discard theology, and faith along with it, to reduce the latter to a corner in humanity's sacristy so that the real human encounter can be realized in the domain of pure reason, of true and uncontaminated philosophy, has characterized "modern" philosophy since Descartes.[22] According to this view, faith would be a privilege gratuitously given by God to the few. Faith would then separate Men while reason would unite them and provide the possibility for universal human communication. Theologies differ, it is said, precisely because they are based on something "more than human." As a result, philosophy becomes the universal science and following the judgments of reason appears the only way to attain, if not a celestial, at least a terrestrial paradise. "Two and two make four anywhere" is the popular summary of this attitude. "Religion divides people while reason unites them" is its sociological translation. As the only source of universal knowledge, philosophy is thus opposed to theology, which it construes as merely exegesis of gratuitous propositions.

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[21] Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), chapter 4.

[22] Cf. Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: Gallimard, 1932), 14: "Je révérais notre théologie et prétendais autant qu'aucun autre à gagner le ciel; mais, ayant appris comme chose très assurée que le chemin n'en est pas moins ouvert aux plus ignorants qu'aux plus doctes, et que les vérités révélées qui y conduisent sont au-dessus de notre intelligence, je n'eusse osé les soumettre à la faiblesse de mes raisonnements, et je pensais que, pour entreprendre de les examiner, et y réussir, il était besoin d'avoir quelque extraordinaire assistance du Ciel et d'être plus qu'homme" [I revered our theology, and aspired as much as anyone to reach heaven: but being given assuredly to understand that the way is not less open to the most ignorant than to the most learned, and that the revealed truths which lead to heaven are above our comprehension, I did not presume to subject them to the impotency of my reason; and I thought that in order competently to undertake their examination, there was need of some special help from heaven, and of being more than man].

The recent historical and philosophical evolution has put Man, mostly Western Man, on guard against a naive rationalistic optimism. Today, after two world wars, a Cold War "officially" over, and at least two atrocious wars before our own eyes; after the failure of idealism and the ensuing chaos of philosophy; faced with an almost worldwide revolution of an entire generation against another, our confidence in reason has been thoroughly shaken. We are actually beginning to suspect that "two and two do not make four," except in a purely dry and abstract realm. It is the revolt of life, of the concrete, that refuses to be imprisoned or paralyzed in reason's formalism. Two roses and two violets make four flowers, to be sure; but completely different from two lilies and two jasmines, although these are also four flowers. Is love for a mother plus love for God the same as love for a car plus love for a garden? Reality cannot be so simply manipulated.

Faced with the nonreasonable situation of the world, the defenders of "pure reason" advance the argument of contamination. The failure of reason, they say, is due to something for which reason itself is not responsible: in itself reason is infallible, but in operation, desires, passions, and feelings mutilate it, render it impotent. The argument, however, is not convincing. First of all, it begs the question and demands a far greater leap of logic than that of the famous and so often misunderstood "ontological argument." In fact it represents a jump from the "real order," which we experience as fallible and nonrational, to the "ideal order" of pure reason by postulating the infallibility of reason. Further, the argument is unconvincing because, even if it were to prove anything, it would be useless: A reason that is theoretically infallible and practically impotent cannot help us. We are not concerned with knowing the theoretical rights of "pure" reason, but with what can actually guide Man. Reason verifies and criticizes; it does not discover and guide. Perhaps we have been seduced by a distorted definition of Man, by removing its most salient element—animality—and so converting Man into a "logical" being.[23] In addition, *logos* is often interpreted in an excessively rationalistic fashion.[24] But I am not interested in attacking reason or bringing the analysis of critical philosophy to bear on it.

It goes without saying that the word "reason" does not need to stand only for a merely Cartesian reason and that today under this word one would include the entire medieval meaning of intellect and even more.

The urgency of our problematic, however, lies in another direction, whose importance and gravity we discover when we confront it. One of the most striking phenomena of our age is atheism. The various manifestations of contemporary atheism generally coincide with denying the *object* of religious faith: such atheism denies the Christian affirmation of the existence of God, rejects the theistic affirmation of transcendence, and so on. Today, a Man is often declared an unbeliever because he refuses to objectivize his faith and does not wish to limit the possibilities of his existence by being recognized as a member of a part of humanity—more or less great—but nevertheless only a part. We could say that a certain monopoly of faith on the part of some groups has taken from him the possibility of believing.[25]

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[23] The famous Aristotelian dictum of Man—λογον δε μονον ανθπωπος εχει των θεων—i.e., as "animale rationale" (a rational animal) means, in fact "Man is the only animal whom [nature] has endowed with *logos* (the gift of speech)" (*Polit.* I.2,1253a9ff.; cf. 7.13.1332b5), which is a totally different matter.

[24] One could write a history of a good part of Western (and Christian) civilization by following the evolution of the concept of "logos" as "verbum Dei" (Word of God, his Son), as "verbum entis" (the rationality of being), "verbum mentis" (word of the mind, as an expression of the rational truth of everything), down to "verbum mundi" (word of the world) and "verbum venti" (word of the wind, i.e., words as mere labels, pragmatic designations of things).

[25] "Today the faculty of faith lies hidden in innumerable human beings," is the beginning of K.

At this point the gravity of our theme appears: Faith cannot be recovered because it was never lost.[26] It is purified because its content is questioned as being ever inadequate.

We might mention in passing two connected problems: the "loss of faith" and "conversion." Does one really lose faith, or is it simply an abandoning of certain belief?[27] Does faith disappear or does Man flee the light?[28] We refer to the so-called great crises of faith that beset our epoch. Have the Catholics of the post–Vatican II era lost their "faith" because they no longer believe what their ancestors held to be the case? Have the neo-Marxists and contemporary Eurocommunists lost their identity because they no longer agree with orthodox party lines? And conversion: Is it a real change of faith or a return to an interiority enabling us to discover what we, in an inadequate or unconscious way, already believed? Would not every conversion be a *gnosis*, a knowing, a *metanoia*, a change of mind, that reveals to us the true name or the authentic belief of what we already believed? We refer to the great traumas caused by conversion into other religious "creeds" that no longer need imply a rupture from and abjuration of the previous tradition. Must a Hindu becoming Christian denounce all his Hindu past? Or must a Christian becoming Buddhist forgo what he still believes is valid in the Christian tradition? Or must an Indonesian becoming Muslim sponsor the Arab cause? Has conversion necessarily to entail alienation? Should we then not distinguish between *faith* and *belief*?[29]

The Three Instances of Faith

To elaborate a little further I wish to bring to mind two conceptions of faith that illustrate this inexhaustible problematic.

The discovery of writing began a new cultural stage for humanity: it showed Man the power he could draw from his rationality. Although sporadic experiences of the almost diabolical character of his volitional capacity have redeemed Man from the wonder and near self-adoration into which he often fell once he left prehistory behind, mankind has nonetheless practically identified his humanity with intelligence and will. As a result, the theology of faith has insisted first on the intellectual aspect of the act of faith and second on its volitional and thus free dimension.[30] If faith then is the supreme value, it will have to be anchored in the supreme human faculties: intellect and will.

Jasper's important study *Der philosophische Glaube Angesichts der Offenbarung* (München: Piper, 1963), 7. (In English: *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* [New York: Harper and Row, 1967], xxv.)

[26] Cf. today almost as a curiosum, G. Baroni, *E' possibile perdere la fede cattolica senza peccato? Dottrina dei teologhi dei secoli XVII–XVIII* (Dissertatio ad Lauream-Gregorianam; Rome: Gregoriana, 1936).

[27] "Faith is not a thing one 'loses,' we merely cease to shape our lives by it." G. Bernanos, *Journal d'un cure de campagne* (Paris: Plon, 1936), 108. (In English, *The Diary of a Country Priest* [New York: Macmillan, 1937], 109.)

[28] "Deus namque sua gratia semel iustificatos non deserit, nisi ab eius prius deseratur" [God, in fact, does not abandon with his grace those whom he has once justified, unless they first abandon him], said Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, c. 26, n. 29, PL 44.261; quoted by the Council of Trent (Sess. VI, c. 11, Denz.-Schön. 1537) and repeated by Vatican I (Denz.-Schön. 3014).

[29] Cf. Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, chapter 2. Cf. also W. C. Smith, *Belief and History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), speaking on faith rather than on belief as "the fundamental religious category." Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, chapter 2 now in *Opera Omnia*, Volume VI, Part 2, chapter 2.

[30] Cf. R. Aubert, *Le problème de l'âcte de foi* (Louvain: Warny, 1958); J. Pieper, *Ueber den Glauben* (München: Kosel, 1962); J. Mouroux, *Je crois en toi* (Paris: Cerf, 1949) (in English: *I Believe: The Personal Structure of Faith* [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959]). Cf. also T. Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology* (Tokyo: Keio Institute, 1965).

The first conception, founded on the primacy of an essentialistic conception of Truth, leads one to identify faith with *orthodoxy*, that is, with correct doctrine properly formulated. The second insists on the moral character of the religious act, based on the supremacy of the Good, and consequently leads one to identify faith with *orthopoiesis*, with the attitude and moral deportment that lead Man to his destiny. If the first risks "dogmatism," the second skirts "moralism." From Paul and James in the first Christian generation to Maritain and Russell in our times we could draw an interminable list. Complementing these two interpretations, which do not seem false but only one-sided, we offer the concept of faith as *orthopraxis*.

This hypothesis does not center orthopraxis in another particular faculty of Man, but links it to his very being, seen as act. If Man as Man is a religious animal, his religion cannot be a sect, his religiousness cannot be based on this free movement that penetrates the totality of his being, rejoining his most profound existence to its source. Faith is what gives him this freedom.[31]

Orthodoxy

The presupposition that Man is above all a "rational animal" has caused the problem of faith to be centered on an almost exclusively intellectual dimension—whence the tendency to consider true faith synonymous with orthodoxy, that is, to link the essence of the act of faith with its conceptually "correct" expression.

This perspective enables us to recognize various degrees in the awareness of faith, since a concept that expresses the content of faith may be more, or less, adequate. Nevertheless it is here maintained that formulation is essential to correct faith. In this way concepts like "erroneous faith" or "infidelity" arise to mark what is not recognized as "orthodox."

It follows that although in principle it is possible to have different formulations of faith, the formulation is in a certain sense intrinsic to the faith itself. So, one cannot have faith if one does not adhere to a definite doctrine. Faith is fundamentally considered a definite understanding. Certainly, faith can be expressed in several formulae, leaving room for a certain doctrinal pluralism. But here the justification of pluralism does not consist in accepting that the different conceptions may express the same existential situation, but in recognizing that in the final analysis they are all equivalent to the heart of the doctrine itself. If the different formulations were not analogous or at least mutually reducible, who would judge whether they are really equivalent? In other words, the only possible pluralism orthodoxy allows is the manifold expression of one and the same doctrine (and this only insofar as one expression is less adequate than another). But there is no place for a pluralism in which the different expressions represent really different doctrines of one ever-transcending reality not reducible to the *logos*.

Now this is only detectable once we jump outside the cultural world in which we usually move. Otherwise, we are existentially unable to distinguish because orthodoxy claims exactly to express (with precision, if imperfectly) the right view on a particular or general religious truth. Orthodoxy makes sense only in the context of one specific and homogeneous culture, that is, under the assumption that one takes for granted the premises necessary to link Reality

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[31] For a descriptive formulation of the New Testament concept of faith, cf. S. Lyonnet, *Les Épîtres de saint Paul aux Galates et aux Romains* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1959): "It is the adherence of the intellect to truths (Rom. 10:9), but even more, it is the adherence of the entire soul to a Person (Rom. 3:22, 26; 10:14; etc.; Gal. 2; 16; etc.). It is an essentially active faith (Gal. 5:6; cf. Eph. 2:10), which, while remaining an activity of Man, is even more God's acting in him (Gal. 2:20), fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:25; 6:8; Rom. 8:14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; etc.)," 61.

unequivocally to a fixed conceptual expression. If, in a given culture—always under the assumption that Man is a "rational animal"—one finds a bi-univocal system of references between Reality and its expression, then all dissension on the conceptual plane will also indicate dissension on the objectively real plane. It is for this reason that in a closed culture one must consider the "heretic" not only mistaken but also in bad faith.[32]

Let me give an example. I may accept and you may deny the attribute of "substantiality" to the Godhead. This is within the limits permitted by orthodoxy as long as neither of us denies the possibility for the other to think (although erroneously, each of us will assume) of God with or without that attribute. But if I cannot admit as even thinkable a God without substantiality, the moment you deny this attribute I shall suppose you deny God altogether. And this is no longer tolerable, for God is here the very symbol for my tolerance of "you." If substance for me means Being and Being, Reality (and Truth), then there is no place within orthodoxy for the true atheist, for someone who denies the "being" of God, and thus the Reality of the entire universe; but this is not necessarily the case in the other two attitudes we have still to describe.

One cannot deny the intellectual character of faith without denying faith itself; however, faith cannot be identified with any of its parameters. In this we see both the strength and the weakness of orthodoxy.

The distinction between both the act of faith and its conceptual formulation, on the one hand, and between faith as a salvific act and belief as its intellectual expression, on the other, characterizes the purest monastic theology.[33] According to one such theology, the act of faith grasps things in themselves. Its formulation is only a conceptualization of some "thing" that transcends it.[34] The formulation of faith cannot be essentially linked to its content without violating its transcendent, supernatural character.[35] This is why the Orthodox and Catholic Churches only condemn doctrinal affirmations that seem contrary to truth: They do not correctly express the ever-transcendent mystery of faith. And faith is a mystery that cannot be tied to a definitive form of expression or related univocally to any intellectual formulation. As long as Man is *viator*, faith can only be "itinerant."

Attempting to immobilize the act of faith by making it depend on unalterable formulations would not only be treason against history but would also deny what faith claims to be: the ontological link relating Man to the transcendent. Faith is not essentially tied to a fixed

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[32] Cf. the efforts of C. Journet in *L'Église du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Desclée, 1941) to distinguish two types of heresy: one, simple heterodoxy; the other, infidelity. Scholastic tradition has long distinguished between formal and material heresy, without considering there could be good will in formal heresy.

[33] Cf. the stanza of the hymn of the *Feria II ad Vesperas* in the Roman Breviary, attributed to Pope St. Gregory the Great (540–604):

Lucem fides adaugeat
Sic luminis iubar ferat:
Haec vana cuncta proterat:
Hanc falsa nulla comprimant.

Faith is a light—an increasing light that illumines the light of reason—it is the leading light, for life; it discovers the vanity of things, that they are really vain, viz., empty; it is irrefutable since no arguments can prove it to be false.

[34] "Actus autem credentis non terminator ad enuntiabile, sed ad rem" [Now the act of the believer does not terminate in the proposition, but in the thing] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 2 ad 2).

[35] Cf. the well-known distinction between "id quo et id quod creditor" [that which is and that which is believed], as, for example, in Cajetan, in II-II, q. 1, a. I, n. II ("credo Deo revelanti et Deum revelatum" [I believe God as revealing and in God as revealed]).

doctrine, but it does need an intellectual vehicle or even, in most cases, a conceptual system to express it.[36] One faith can crystallize in several systems of belief.

The importance of the so-called articles of faith lies in the fact that although no formulation is exhaustive, not every formula is necessarily true. An article of faith can attain greater or lesser conceptual perfection. This formal perfection comes from either of two sources: the (more or less perfect) philosophical system it uses, or the intuition expressing (with greater or lesser profundity) the ineffable and transcendent content of faith, what Christian theology calls "first truth," the unique and ultimate object of all faith.[37]

The role of orthodoxy is to defend the rights of the intellect in the ontological "linking" of Man to God.[38] It is not, however, I would submit, the feebleness of our intellect that leads us to proceed beyond it, but the fact that the intellectual element does not exhaust the nature of faith. Even in contemporary speech we speak of a Man in good faith to indicate one who, although far from orthodoxy, is not outside its effective sphere.

In defending the community of faith between Men and angels, and in considering the formal object of faith above materially believable truths, that is, in underscoring the subjectively formal aspect of faith, scholastic theology wishes to say, it seems to me, just what I want to show here,[39] namely, that faith is unique, even if its conceptual translations and vital manifestations are multiple.[40]

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[36] "Fides non potest exire in actum, nisi aliquid determinate et expresse credendo" [Faith cannot reveal itself in an action unless it believes in something in a decisive and explicit way], Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent.*, dist. 25, q. 1, art. 1, sol I ad 3.

[37] "Sed contra est quod Dionysius dicit [*De Div. Nom.* c. 7, 4, lect. 5], quod 'fides est circa simplicem et semper existentem veritatem.' Haec autem est veritas prima. Ergo obiectum fidei est veritas prima" [On the contrary, Dionysius says that "faith is about the simple and everlasting truth. Now this is the First Truth. Therefore the object of faith is the First Truth] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 1, a.1). Cf. the words of Augustine: "Sic amatur veritas, ut quicumque aliud amant, hoc quod amant velint esse veritatem" [Thus is the truth loved, that all which love any other thing would gladly have that which they so love to be the truth] (*Confess.* 10.23.34 [quoted by Meister Eckhart, *Expos. in 10* 1.1–2.no. 48]).

[38] "Veritas prima se habet in fide et ut medium et obiectum" [First truth lies in faith as medium and object] (Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 8 ad 3).

[39] "Sed tamen considerandum est quod in obiecto fidei est aliquid quasi formale, scilicet veritas prima super omnem naturalem conitionem creaturae existens; et aliquid materiale, sicut id cui assentimus, inhaerendo primae veritati. Quantum ergo ad primum horum, communiter fides est in omnibus habentibus cognitionem de Deo, futura beatitudine nondum adepta, inhaerendo primae veritati: sed quantum ad ea quae materialiter credenda proponuntur, quaedam sunt credita ab uno quae sunt manifeste scita ab alio" [Nevertheless we must observe that in the object of faith, there is something formal, as it were, namely the First Truth surpassing all the natural knowledge of the creature, and something material, namely, the thing to which we assent while adhering to the First Truth. With regard to the former, before obtaining the happiness to come, faith is common to all who have knowledge of God, by adhering to the First Truth. But with regard to the things which are proposed as the material object of faith, some are believed by one, and known plainly by another] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q. 5, a.1 c).

[40] "Formale autem obiectum fidei est unum et simplex, scilicet veritas prima. . . . Unde ex hac parte fides non diversificatur in credentibus, sed est una specie in omnibus. . . . Sed ea quae materialiter credenda proponuntur sunt plura, et possunt accipi vel magis vel minus explicite; et secundum hoc potest unus homo plura explicite credere quam alius" [Now the formal object of faith is one and simple, namely the First Truth. . . . Hence in this respect there is no diversity of faith among believers, but it is specifically one in all. . . . But the things which are proposed as the matter of our belief are many and can be received more or less explicitly. And in this respect one man can believe explicitly more things than another] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, II-II, q. 5, a. 4 c).

An analogy from the physical world could perhaps symbolize this: A crystal prism decomposes light into different monochromatic components; another prism, placed at a different angle, re-collects all the wave lengths into a single beam of light. Likewise the "object" of faith, considered as the ultimate term of the ontological intentionality of the act of faith, is unique; there is only one Absolute. When the single light beam of faith is refracted in the prism of our consciousness, it is decomposed into as many conceptual beams as there are intellectual structures by which the pure act of faith is expressed. The "colors" and the angles of the rays are different, to be sure. but their source is one and they can be reunited. Heterodoxy is the mixture of colors or the confusion of angles. Orthodoxy does not need to maintain there can be only a single, monochromatic beam. Numerous colors can appear on the doctrinal screen. Light is faith; the act of faith is the refraction of light (not absorbing it altogether) under its "proper" angle. Colors are the symbols of belief. The color depends on the wavelength or on the nature of the body; yet no color is without light—nor light without color.

Orthopoiesis

Perhaps a reference to the Protestant Reformation will help clarify our point. To the intellectual and, in a certain sense, static and objective aspect of faith, the Reformation opposed a more dynamic notion, predominantly subjective, stressing the voluntarist character of the act of faith. If one does not live in conformity with the exigencies of the act of faith, one is not Christian, Protestant theology tells us; the sacraments are not efficacious if one is not worthy of them. If the community of Christians by and large does not live its faith, it ceases to be the church founded by Christ, and so on. Only faith can save,[41] and consequently it cannot be reduced to a mere intellectual assent separate from life: faith without works is dead faith,[42] and in every believing will there is an inclination to live in accord with faith.

Whatever it is, faith doubtless contains a practical and volitive element: its end is not merely the Truth but also the Good. Certainly it is insufficient to identify religion with ethics or reduce faith just to moral deportment, but one cannot deny that it is precisely faith that makes possible the unity of life in Man's daily existence.[43]

In order to understand the diverse facets of the problem in their real complexity, we must distinguish between the transcendent plane where faith moves and the plane where ethics resides. It is not rigorously exact to say, following the famous Augustinian diatribe, that the virtues of the pagans were *splendida vitia*, "splendid vices," but we cannot deny that if faith is reduced to orthopoiesis one destroys the very foundation of religion, which claims to be more than mere "perfectionism."

Like orthodoxy, orthopoiesis has its place in a global conception of faith. However, the relation is not reversible: negative moral deportment could be an obstacle to a real life of faith, but an irreproachable ethical life is not equivalent to a life of faith.

Furthermore, just as faith can be expressed in more than one orthodox formulation, it can also be manifest in differing ethical behavior. This consideration is important since it enables us to understand other religions and cultures whose customs, even today, are consid-

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[41] Cf. Rom 1:16; 3:28, 30; Gal 2:16; 5:6; etc.

[42] Cf. Jas 2:17.

[43] Cf. Jn 7:17 and also St. Gregory the Great, *Hom.* 23 *in Ev.* (as in the Roman Breviary, for Monday within the octave of Easter, lesson iii): "Quisquis ergo vult audita intelligere festinet ea quae jam audire potuit, opere implere [Whoever, then, desires to understand the lessons he has heard, let him hasten to put in practice what he has already been able to hear]."

ered by many people intrinsically immoral. Just as there is doctrinal pluralism, so there is also ethical pluralism. And just as doctrinal pluralism does not mean conceptual chaos, so ethical pluralism does not imply moral anarchy. To decipher a code, we must have a clue; to confront several different ethics, we must ascend "even higher."[44]

The positive value of orthopoiesis is the accentuation of faith as love, as a personal offering, as a decision about life, as freely assumed human freedom. A faith that is mere conviction, unexpressed in life, is incomplete.

Faith shapes human existence: It rules the destiny of Man. It is the necessary condition for "right action."[44]

Through this understanding of faith, Man becomes the artist of his own life, and the life he constructs is above all terrestrial: in a certain sense, it is a construction exterior to his being. Through faith, Man the artist expresses himself through his *poietic* capacity. Without faith, not only would no cathedrals have been built, but we would have neither atomic weapons nor artificial hearts.

It should be clear by now that we have taken the Aristotelian concepts of "poiesis" and "praxis" as relevant for our distinctions. By the first we understand human activity whose result falls on the external object to which the act is directed; in the second, the act reverts to the agent himself and transforms him.[45]

Orthopraxis

Man possesses intelligence and will. He rushes forward, drawn toward the Truth and the Good. But he is not exhausted there, or, better said, these primordial activities spring from an even more radical source: his very being, his being as *act*. Human life is not exhausted either in the thought process or in extrinsic constructions: Man is much more than a spectator or constructor of the world. Above all he is an actor; fundamentally he enacts himself through his capacity—not exhausted by his *facere*—to embrace his *agere* as well. His activity is not simply *poiesis*, but above all *praxis*. Herein lies the meaning of the sacred action that all religions recognize: the horizon of orthopraxis.

Through faith Man becomes himself; in other words, he is saved, completed, attains his fullness, obtains liberation, his final end, by whatever name he may call it.

Religions do not claim primarily to teach a doctrine or provide a technique. They claim to save Man, that is, to liberate him or, in other words, to open for him the way to the fullness of his being, whatever this fullness may be. When this end is interpreted as an intellectual vision, the doctrinal aspect comes to the fore. If, on the other hand, it is seen as a reward for a life,

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[44] Cf. the Buddhist problematic on this issue, which undoubtedly transcends the realm of orthopoiesis.

[45] Here is not the place to elaborate further on this distinction, which played an important role in the whole of ancient and medieval anthropology. Cf. the scholastic *actio immanens* (or *operatio*) over against *actio transiens* (or *factio*). Our distinction does not, nevertheless, coalesce with the simple scheme represented, for instance, in the commonly repeated text: "Duplex est actio, una, quae transit in exteriorem materiam, ut calefacere et secare; alia, quae manet in agente, ut intelligere, sentire et velle. Quarum haec est differentia, quia prima actio non est perfectio agentis, quod movet, sed ipsius moti, secunda autem actio est perfectio agentis" [Action is two-fold. Actions of one kind pass out to external matter, as to heat or to cut, whilst actions of the other kind remain in the agent, as to understand, to sense, and to will. The difference between them is this, that the former action is the perfection not of the agent that moves, but of the thing moved, while the latter action is the perfection of the agent] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q. 18, a. 3 ad 1).

for moral conduct, the practical values have the primacy. But in both cases, one presupposes that human fullness consists in acquiring this value that lies at the center of human finality.

Orthopraxis illuminates a fact prior to all doctrine and all deportment: Man should reach his goal and fullness, however we may interpret these expressions.[46]

We have introduced the term "orthopraxis" not as a sign of our dependence on a particular philosophical system, but as a concentrated expression of what we mean. *Praxis* is that human activity that modifies and fashions not only Man's exterior existence but also the interior dimension of his life. The effect of praxis is part of Man's very being: it is the salvific activity par excellence. Within a certain metaphysical framework, praxis is that activity that actualizes the potentiality of the human being. "Work out your salvation with diligence," said Gautama Buddha, just before his death.

Now, we should not mistake the concept of praxis for praxis itself, not only in the obvious sense in which no concept is the "conceptualized" thing, but in a very peculiar way, inasmuch as here the very concept does not stand for some "thing" about which we may have a more or less adequate concept, but as "anything" which, in a given frame of reference, may stand for that praxis. In this way, if the end of Man is to become God, he is divinized by orthopraxis. If human fullness consists in the individual's contribution to future society, orthopraxis constitutes the actions that lead to this contribution. If the goal of human life is to annihilate the contingent and the existent, the actions that deliver Man from his earthly condition represent orthopraxis, and so on.

The quintessence of faith, then, reflects this aspect of Man that moves him toward fullness, this dimension by which Man is not closed up in his present state but open to perfection, to his goal or destiny, according to the schema one adopts. Faith is not fundamentally the adhesion to a doctrine or an ethic. Rather, it is manifest as an act that opens to us the possibility of perfection, permitting us to attain to what we are not yet. The concept of orthopraxis does not eliminate the possibility of erroneous actions, but it excludes the possibility of interpreting them only in terms of doctrine or morality.

Every action that leads to the perfection of Man in his concrete existential situation, every action that leads Man to his realization, is authentic praxis, a way to salvation.[47]

Just as error is possible in the doctrinal order and mistakes occur in human conduct, so pseudo-praxis is possible: it is an action that does not build Man up. Human liberty and dignity are based on the fact that Man is a required factor in constructing his own destiny. But being the constructor or at least coconstructor of his own destiny, Man risks failure. He can reach his goal or he can become lost on the way and not arrive; stop in his becoming (being); and this, viewed after the fact, leads one to say this person never had being.[48] It is

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[46] It does not seem necessary to insist that "salvation," "liberation," "goal," "fullness," are terms that do not necessarily have a specific content or need to be interpreted only in the light of the so-called salvific religions. Here all these words stand for the *x* at the term of human life—individually, collectively, cosmically, or in whatever sense this life might be understood.

[47] For a more complete elaboration of this theme, cf. R. Panikkar, *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1970). Now in Vol. VII of this *Opera Omnia*.

[48] Cf. the dictum "Peccatores in quantum peccatores non sunt" [Sinners qua sinners are not] in agreement with the optimistic metaphysical view of evil as a *privatio*. This sentence is the obliged answer to the query that if God is love, he has to love everything (cf. Wis 11:25) and thus cannot hate sin (cf. Ps 5:7). St. Thomas's answer is worth quoting: "Deus autem peccatores, inquantum sunt naturae quaedam, amat: sic enim et sunt, et ab ipso sunt. Inquantum vero peccatores sunt, non sunt, sed ab esse deficiunt: et hoc in eis a Deo non est" [God loves sinners insofar as they are existing natures; for they have existence, and have it from Him. Insofar as they are sinners, they have not existence at all, but fall

not a question of Man's being presented with homogeneous alternatives—heaven or hell, to be or not to be.[49] It is more a question of the possibility of fulfillment offered to every Man than a Manichean dichotomy of standing before the alternative of not realizing the destiny to which the individual seemed called. I say "seemed" because if we move from a general and essential problematic to a concrete and ontic consideration of existence, the individual who does not reach his end proves by this very fact that he did not have being, since the not-yet-being that characterizes his terrestrial existence has not been realized. If Man is not-yet-being (for he is still *be-ing*, still on his way to fulfillment), the individual who does not reach his destination (his being) can in truth be said not to have been, since we *are* only insofar as we shall be.[50] Hindu *karma*, Christian predestination, humanist religion, and so on could offer us many ways of solving the same question.

An important but different problem (which does not render invalid what I have just said) is the possible interpretation of orthopraxis as hetero-praxis or auto-praxis. In the former case, the saving act comes from above or outside the individual; in the latter, salvation comes from within. A certain type of Buddhism and a certain contemporary existentialism could serve as example of auto-praxis. Most traditional interpretations of religions bear witness to hetero-praxis. A deeper understanding of person (in contrast to individual) could perhaps offer a new solution to this almost "chronic" problem—but we should refrain now from elaborating further.[51]

Faith as a Human Invariant

Theological Consideration

An introductory theological consideration seems opportune now, to point out the horizon where this reflection on the nature of faith as a constitutive human dimension emerges. I could utilize the schema of any "theology," Buddhist or Hindu, for example. But to be better understood by the Western reader and because the problem has become particularly agonizing within Christianity, I shall use Christian terminology.

Christianity considers faith absolutely necessary for salvation. Without faith we cannot reach God, because by definition it is the bridge that links us to Him.[52] This affirmation seems axiomatic since, whatever the destiny of Man, that by which it is attained or discovered constitutes the structural morphology of faith. The faith of an atheist, for example, is what permits him to discover himself entirely divorced from any theistic transcendence. This faith alone, he says, offers him the possibility of realizing his life's destiny. Some may call it

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short of it; and this in them is not from God] (*Sum. theol.* I, q. 20, a. 2 ad 4). Hence in pure Thomism hell is merely an ontic abortion!

[49] It should not be forgotten that the congruent medieval conception of "hell" is not just the dialectical counterpart of heaven, but a failure to become—a hole, as it were, in the "new heaven and the new earth," a kind of abortion of "eternal life." Cf. the previous footnote.

[50] Cf. R. Panikkar, *El concepto de naturaleza*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: CSIC, 1972), 225–32, where the teleological conception of contingent being is developed. Now in Volume X, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

[51] Cf. regarding the entrance into the kingdom of God, the suggestive saying of the *Gospel of Thomas* 22, seen in this light: "When you make the two one, and make the inside like the outside, and the outside like the inside, and the upper side like the underside, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, . . . you shall enter [the kingdom]."

[52] "Humanae salutis initium, fundamentum et radix omnis iustificationis" [Faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of every justification]. Thus the Council of Trent summarized the New Testament doctrine (Denz.-Schön. 1532).

conviction, intuition, discovery. *Sed de nominibus non est disputandum.* It comes to the same, something that frees Man from inauthentic existence. Here Christian theology cannot escape the alternative: either only those who have the Christian faith are saved or salvific faith can also be found among so-called nonbelievers.[53]

The classic distinction between implicit and explicit Christian faith shows that tradition has admitted that the essence of faith does not consist in its explication but in what causes it to arise. This already represents a relaxation of too rigid an orthodoxy, but the recognition of implicit faith as a condition of salvation is often interpreted as a fact of the doctrinal order, that is, within the intellectual domain. In effect, the recognition that God exists and that he rewards was said to constitute the indispensable foundation for the explication of true doctrine.[54] And yet the accepted salvation of baptized infants makes it possible to recognize, by virtue of the ontological change introduced by baptism, an implicit faith not simply in the doctrinal order, but also outside this order. The salvific faith of the infants cannot be at all intellectual.

Both of these—the doctrinal insufficiency of the ignorant and the doctrinal incapacity of baptized infants—offer a point of support within the tradition that we must continue by going beyond it. They lead us to reexamine widespread opinion that faith is the privilege of Christians alone and the exception for anyone else. If we admit what is commonly accepted—that the person who acts in good faith according to one's conscience is saved—it follows that since this conscience generally moves the person to follow one's own religion, in doing so the person reaches salvation. In some way, then, salvific faith is included in this good faith, for without faith there is no salvation.

Further, it follows that faith must be something common to Man, whatever their religious beliefs. Denying this amounts to saying that the vast majority of humanity does not reach salvation and is damned. At least quantitatively, human creation would be an almost total failure.

But, beyond orthodoxy and orthopoiesis, we can still ask what constitutes the real essence of faith.

Having posed the theological problem in this way, we are led to seek the structure of faith belonging to the very constitution of Man. Now, a critique of an exclusivistic faith should not cause us to go to the other extreme and defend a universality that excludes all discrimination and difference. This directs us to another theological consideration.

What has just been said does not impugn the validity of various classical doctrines on faith that emphasize its differential aspect. If faith is a gift from God,[55] nothing prevents it from being a universal gift, like nature or existence. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the gift of being (as traditional creationist terminology calls it) and the gift of faith. The former is conceived of as the gift of substance, more or less complete, but basically subsistent, consistent. The gift of faith, on the contrary, cannot be interpreted substantially: it is a gift inviting response, a challenging call, a door that is opened[56]—all of this implies

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[53]   No need to recall the incongruency of retaining today the old nomenclature of "nonbelievers" (which, incidentally, derives from translation of "infidels") while at the same time maintaining the idea common to biblical and other religions in general, that faith is necessary for salvation. Either they are not "unbelievers" or they are not saved (or, following the other line, faith is a mere label for a particular "sect" of people). Or should we already advance our distinction? They may be unbelievers but not unfaithful.

[54]   Cf. Heb 11:6 and the interpretation of the Council of Trent, Session VI, cap. 6 (Denz.-Schön. 1526).

[55]   Cf. Eph 2:8, which shows the instrumental character of faith. We may understand it: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God."

[56]   Cf. Acts 14:27.

freedom and the possibility of refusal, for a gift is not a gift if it is not accepted, if there is not a positive response. Faith is that a-substantial dimension of Man that makes it possible for him not to stop midway, or to become paralyzed in time, locked into the past. Faith is fundamentally dynamic, functional, "that which one hopes." It is that gift that makes fullness possible because it elicits a response to an appeal, to the call to be human. But this appeal has been made once and for all—ἅπαξ (*hapax*)—to all Men.[57]

Traditional Christian theology would say that the act of faith responds to supernatural grace and gratuity, but this does not deny that the structure of faith and the act of faith may be of the order I have tried to describe. Without analyzing the concrete functioning of faith or the conditions required for the act of faith, we could already conclude that many different notions of faith have their place in the fundamental structure I am going to describe, and, notably, the doctrine of the act of faith as a supernatural act is not necessarily or directly contested.

Venturing a hypothesis on how the act of faith functions amounts to having already entered the realm of theories that, to be accepted, demand that one recognize their supporting philosophical foundations. In Christian language one could say: Man's destiny is divinization, that is, becoming God. But how? We might find in the idea of the Trinity an answer to the paradox of integral union with God on the one hand and distinction from Him on the other. Just as the Son and the Spirit are identical with regard to the Father, they are also infinitely different—for nothing finite exists in the Trinity. Strictly speaking, we cannot talk of equality or difference in the heart of the divinity; these categories presuppose either an independent, exterior criterion of measurement (inadmissible here) or a higher referent with which, or in which, this equality or inequality is confronted (impossible in the realm of the divine).

On earth, Man is not perfect: He is neither fully Man nor truly God; he is not yet what he is called to be. He has (or has received) the capacity to become what he must be in order to realize his destiny; in fact, he must actualize it concretely. The first capacity we call "faith," the second "act of faith." Whether or not the grace of God is necessary to freely decide an act of faith raises a problem of a different order, but not one incompatible with what we are saying. If God is the end of Man, it seems plausible that to attain him, the *terminus a quo* (starting point) as well as the *terminus ad quem* (end point) participate in the act that conducts Man to his goal. At the same time, however, it does not follow from these principles that the same grace cannot inspire doctrinally unequal acts of faith; in other words, we cannot affirm that heterodoxy—doctrinal heterodoxy—is a univocal sign of lack of faith (which would amount to saying that one who does not know the true doctrine cannot be saved). The Christian tenet that true faith is faith in God and consequently in Christ is not incompatible with what we are elaborating,[58] but our subject is not directly concerned with this problem.[59]

Despite St. Paul's descriptions of faith, and the analyses of Scholasticism, Christian tradition has always believed that so-called theological virtues originate from a single source and belong to a single human, and at the same time are "supernatural," *existentiale*.

Likewise, though perhaps with a more universal approach, my thesis highlights the anthropological dimension that unites these three aspects of the same *existentiale*.

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[57] Cf. Heb 11. The sense of this "semel" (Heb 9:12, 26), like that of the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 7:26, 27), is not simply temporal but *tempiternal*.

[58] We may quote what Origen says concerning faith in the name of Jesus—εἰσ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ (*eis to onoma autou*) and faith in him—εἰσ αὐτὸν (*eis auton*) (*Comm. in Jo.* 10.44). Obviously it is not a question of two faiths.

[59] Cf. R. Panikkar, "The Meaning of Christ's Name in the Universal Economy of Salvation," *Evangelization, Dialogue, and Development,* Documenta Missionalia 5 (Rome) (1972): 195–218.

Faith, in fact, as I have said, is existential openness, the void that is within Man and makes him capable of something *more*, something *ever beyond*. Man is a quintessentially unsatisfied being. One thing is what the Buddhist tradition calls *tṛṣṇā* (*taṇhā*), or thirst, which is usually (but incorrectly) translated as desire. Another thing is that constitutive dimension of Man that I would call aspiration, that is, the response of our whole being to the inspiration that comes from the Spirit and that we feel within us.

Hope, in this anthropological perspective, is nothing other than the anticipation of faith, an emerging from the void toward something that can fill the emptiness, a reaching out toward the infinite, the ineffable, the "ever more," *nirvāṇa*, *brahman*, or however we wish to call it. If the act of faith is, as we have said, the intellectual response to discovering oneself as an open being, an unfulfilled entity, an as yet unrealized person, hope is the "logically" preceding act of emerging from oneself to move toward an infinite and indefinite goal. Hope is not thirst or desire; it is a movement or aspiration toward that goal, whether it be transcendence or something else. What distinguishes it from desire is the fact that, like faith, hope is not directed toward an object. It is not hope of something or for something. The moment hope is fossilized in an object it freezes; it turns into desire in the Buddhist sense of the word; it is transformed into an instrument of the will and thus becomes a source of anxiety, suffering, discomfort, *duḥkha*.

Without faith there would be no hope. Faith is the very condition of the possibility of hope. Now hope is more fragile than faith. Faith is always there, even when the act of faith does not emerge. Yet this faith can be suffocated, so to speak; it can sink into itself and prevent the movement of hope from materializing—in other words, the impulse can be repressed. Often what is referred to as a loss of faith is a wound inflicted with, varying degrees of gravity, on hope.

If faith is the gap, the emptiness within Man, and hope is the impulse, the movement toward *that*, the *tat* that we "are" (*tat tvam asi*), love (or charity) is the actual "coming out," the true *extasis* of Man. While faith is pure *stasis* and hope is *epektasis*, love is *extasis*. In the end it is love that "saves" Man, because it forces him out of his shell, his limits, and ultimately his finiteness. If hope is the impulse, love is the union, the actual fruition.

While, as we have said, hope is fragile, love is even more vulnerable. If hope is a kind of projection from the very depths of the human abyss (faith), love needs an actual call from *beyond*, from the Other. Like faith, love has no "object" in the strict sense of the word, but neither is it a "project," an outward *pro-jection*. It is, rather, an *in-jection*, a "throwing in of itself," needing in some way another pole that invites and attracts it, and which appears to be genuinely "loveable." Love is not alone. It cannot bear isolation. Love demands the overcoming of monism, the subversion of solipsism, the demolishing of the monologue. Love is dialogue. And in this lies its great vulnerability: the succumbing to dualism, the very destruction of the Oneness of the human being and reality. True love must be understood only in an advaitic sense, where the beloved is neither one nor two in relation to the lover, but is the polarity that was missing, so to speak, the polarity that was invisible until love manifested itself. When love ceases to run after the Other (*alius*) and turns toward Another (*aliud*), when it runs after some*thing* and not after some*one*, when its own dynamism becomes an end in itself, then it turns into lust—desire in the pejorative sense of the word.

Love is essentially personal; it is the discovery of the *you*. Yet this discovery is a revelation. On my own I am unable to remove the veil from my ignorance; I need someone to reveal his *self*—his *yourself*—to me, to show himself to me as a *you*. The other pole, without me, is just as vulnerable and devoid of consistency as I am without "it," without the *you*, but in some way it is not only up to me to take the initiative. Of course, any *I* implies and invokes

a *you*, but the *you* must be there to respond. Love can easily be an illusion when the *you* is not there. The *extasis* is real when the *ex* I am reaching toward is a real *you* that is willing to receive me. Once again, however, this reception equally depends on a projection. If my hope is not "well placed," my love will die out.

I do not intend here to go into the dynamism of love and its advaitic structure, since I have already discussed the subject in length elsewhere.[60] Nor will I dwell on the personalistic structure of Man and reality. It will be sufficient for our purpose to underline the trinitarian (i.e., dynamic) unity of faith, hope, and love.

Philosophical Reflection

Our investigation seeks something in Man that links him to transcendence, brings him to his end (Absolute, God, Nothingness, or whatever)—in other words, something that makes progress possible toward what Man is not yet, the bridge connecting him with his destiny. This "something" must be sufficiently ample and universal to constitute the foundation of salvation for Man as Man. It must justify our affirmation that the very fact of being human means that Man has the real possibility of attaining the end proper to him. This end—however we may characterize it—is what we have called *salvation*.

Evidently, this "something" cannot belong to the purely doctrinal order since the world of concepts depends upon the possibilities offered by the different cultures through which it is expressed. In fact there is no universal culture in either time or space. And a concept is meaningful, and hence valid, only where it has been conceived.

This fundamental "something" we seek can only be found as a constitutive dimension rooted in the very existence of Man. Our task is to try to describe it, and we say "describe" because, in speaking of a fundamental human dimension, we lack any external overview for a rigorous definition.

We could describe faith as *existential openness toward transcendence* or, if this seems too loaded, more simply as *existential openness*. This openness implies a bottomless capacity to be filled without closing. Were it to close, it would cease to be faith. The openness is always to a *plus ultra*, to an ever farther, which we may call *transcendence* and in a certain sense transcendental.

One is open to what one is not or, rather, to what one has not yet become. Real openness means the possibility of being: openness to Being. It implies a capacity to be ever more and more filled, an "in-finite" receptivity, because Man is not "finished," finite. Man is open because he is not closed, he is not complete because he is itinerant, not definite, not "finished," in-complete. The existential openness of faith represents Man's capacity for his non-finitude, that is, his in-finity. No person considers himself as finished, as having exhausted the possibilities of becoming. The opening of which we speak is constitutive of the human being, the other side of what we call contingency. This latter appears when we look backward, to our foundation, thus discovering that we do not have in and of ourselves the ground of our own existence. The former, that is, the existential opening, appears when we look forward, toward the goal, the end, the transcendent, and so on, and discover that we are not complete.

We should not affirm a priori that all religions say the same. An important branch of the Buddhist tradition will object to the language I have just used. And in fact the Buddhist insight obliges us to go a step further, toward a kind of metaontology. Nevertheless, hardly any

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[60] Cf., for example, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Advaita and Bhakti," in *Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue*, Volume VI, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

other religious tradition has more forcefully underscored the fact that *we are not*, so much so that it will say that we should not surreptitiously intercalate a *yet*. The way to *nirvaṇa* implies precisely the total openness without qualifications.

Recognizing Man's openness means admitting he is not God, that is, not (yet?) finished, absolute, definitive. It means admitting there is something in him that must evolve; it also affirms the capacity for such evolution.[61] The openness of faith is Man's capacity to proceed toward his fullness.

This openness is not primordially a capacity of the intelligence as a faculty of the infinite, but rather an openness we call existential to indicate that it does not primarily belong to the realms of intellect or will, but to a prior level given in the very existence of Man. Only the naked existential order, previous to intellect and will, offers the desired universality.[62]

Thanks to this dimension of faith, Man recognizes that he is not finished, he needs completion; better, he needs definite aid to attain the goal. Thanks to faith, Man discovers his indigence. Faith is precisely the base underpinning both human precariousness and the possibility of overcoming it. Further, Man's grandeur and his supreme dignity are expressed by faith, since its existential openness does not signify merely need but complementarily indicates an unlimited capacity for growth. Finally it represents a much firmer foundation than human autonomy or self-sufficiency, and expresses the supreme ontic richness possible; we recognize that no human or limited value whatsoever can fill it.

Existential anxiety, modern gnoseological atheism, and certain social ideologies today are various manifestations of this fundamental attitude of faith that is not satisfied with anything closed, limited, finished. Prefabricated responses, previously given solutions—always things of the past—are inadmissible on the plane of faith. Human dignity resides precisely in the anthropological dimension of faith: Man is an ever open, infinite being.

In a word, faith is rooted in the Absolute; consequently it is the foundation of freedom—an important theme that, for the moment, we can only mention.[63] Without faith Man would not, could not be free; he would have neither the constitutive ambiguity that permits decision, nor the spontaneity necessary for the human act to go beyond—not against—the dialectical possibilities given in the data. True freedom does not consist in manipulating possibilities but in creating them. God creates and his creation is the real; human freedom also participates in this power, and Man's creation is the possible. Freedom is not simply the power of option, but the power of creating possibilities.

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[61] Cf. the remark of Teilhard de Chardin: "La foi néo-humaine au Monde, dans la mesure même où elle est *foi* (c'est-à-dire don et abandon, pour toujours, à un plus grand que soi), implique nécessairement un élément d'adoration, c'est-à-dire l'admission de quelque 'Dieu'" [Neo-human faith in the World, to the extent that it is truly a Faith (that is to say, entailing sacrifice and the final abandonment of self for something greater), necessarily implies an element of worship, the acceptance of some "God"] Le coeur du problème" (1949) in *L'Avenir de l'Homme, Oeuvres* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 5:346.

[62] This would be my comment on the definition of faith as "an act of existential understanding" given by S. M. Ogden in "The Christian Proclamation of God to Men of the So-Called 'Atheistic Age,'" *Concilium* 6, no. 2 (June 1966): 46, although it seems to me we are both speaking in the same direction. Cf. in this regard the words of Clement of Alexandria, who was "the first to combine the Aristotelian term faith with the Stoic term assent" (*apud* H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 3rd ed. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970], 120): "Jam vero fides, et si est voluntaria animae assensio, est tamen bonorum operatrix, et justae fundamentum actionis" [Faith, moreover, though it is a voluntary assent of the soul, is nevertheless a worker of good things and the foundation for good actions] (*Strom.* 5.13.86, PG 9.128A).

[63] Cf. chapter 16 of this book.

The openness of faith is a constitutive openness. It cannot be closed; it is infinite, neither limited nor limitable. Faith is like a hole in the human being that is never filled, saturated, or turned into a kind of substantivity that would represent the supreme religious blasphemy and sever Man from any relation with the infinite. Through this hole he reaches the infinite.

As the bridge between us and the Absolute, faith is a υποστατσισ (hypostasis) whose στατσισ (stand) resides in the hope for what is not yet and whose υπο (base) is found in what can never appear, that is, in the radical apophatism of what—as such—can never have epiphany, because its φαινομενον (*phenomenon*), its epiphany is already the ειkων (icon, image), the λογοσ (*logos*, word).[64]

For still another reason we call faith "openness" and, as we shall see in what follows, "question," since it is essential to faith to be a powerless capacity, an ontological thirst that cannot be quenched, an anthropological desire that cannot be satisfied and that—if it could—would annihilate Man by destroying this constitutive tension that thrusts him ever toward the Absolute (whatever we call it: God, nothing, Man, society, future). Faith is constitutive of humanity's itinerant condition.

Returning to the distinction between faith as "opening" and the act of faith as "response to this opening," we will add a new consideration.

Philosophical reflection on the essence of faith emerges, it seems to me, from an analysis of the inquisitive nature of Man.[65] Man is an inquiring being who *desires, seeks, questions.*

This triple articulation of the inquisitive nature of Man seems important. Above all, Man *desires.*[66] In considering the centrality of desire let us not forget the prominent place it occupies in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, to cite only three traditions. In Man there is a connatural movement toward the "farther," the "yet more," toward something distinct from himself that can complete him and satisfy his incessant thirst for transcendence, his yearning to go ever *plus ultra*, ever beyond, never to stop. We know the typical reaction of Buddha, St. Augustine, and many others: to interiorize desire, to purify the factor of alienation that all desire seems to bear with it.

Desire not only drives us to satisfy us, but also to *seek* and pursue the search endlessly, even when its immediate object has been attained. In Man there is not only the romantic desire to listen to the beating of a heart filled with longing; Man is an active being who hunts the object of his desire, tracks it, smells it out, directs himself to what completes him, throws himself toward the terrestrial, and even the temporal frontiers, seeking perhaps not any particular object but simply what he does not have, what he is not. This search constitutes Man. What we call God, Man, Truth, the Good, Pleasure, Life, or Nothing is but the terminus of this desire.

This human search presents a characteristic dimension: *the question.*[67] Man's first question is directed not to what things are or to what he himself *is*, but to what lies behind his

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[64] Cf. Heb 1:2ff. in connection with 11:1, etc.

[65] "So ist das fragenmüssende Sein Nichtsein, ist in seinem innersten Seinsgrund schwach. Seins-mächtigkeit ist endlich, darum muss es fragen, darum ist es nicht schlechthin bei sich" (K. Rahner, *Geist in der Welt* (München: Kösel, 1957), 85; "Thus the being that must ask is non-being, is deficient in its innermost ground of being. The intensity of its being is finite, and therefore it must ask. Therefore it is not absolutely present-to-itself" (Rahner, *Spirit in the World* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1968], 72).

[66] Cf. Dan 9:23.

[67] The reader will forgive us for not elaborating here on the metaphysical reflections of M. Heidegger, R. Bultmann, K. Rahner, E. Coreth, H.-G. Gadamer, etc., on the problematic of the question. Cf. also H.-D. Bastian, *Theologie der Frage* (München: Kaiser, 1969).

very search. Man seeks what he has not, or is not. He always seeks his completion, his God.[68] Anthropologically speaking, God is the final goal of desire,[69] the end of every desire—in both senses of the expression.[70]

Faith relates to Man's inquisitive structure. He asks because he does not know *yet*, but—and this makes him truly an inquiring being—he also asks because he knows that he does not know yet, and because he knows that in knowing he will obtain not only the answer but that on which the answer is based.[71] The question also provides the frame within which the answer can appear as an answer: ontically, the answer is contained in the question. The question, then, is nothing other than the ontological condition for the answer.[72] Consequently every question is an inquiry about God and Man.[73] No question ever obtains an adequate response, since at bottom every question is about the infinite.[74] We speak, of course, of human questioning and not of mere asking for information. Each authentic question is a human incursion into nothingness.[75]

Revelation from the side of transcendence without a previous question from our side would not be revelation, nor would it be intelligible since it would not be the manifestation, the epiphany of what one asks, seeks, desires. Complete heterogeneity would be indiscernible and from every point of view inefficacious. Even the most metaphysical nothingness can only be a negation of being.[76] The question about nothingness is only meaningful within the horizon of being.

Until now more philosophical importance has been given to the ontological than to the ontic, and as a result, faith has been considered a response rather than a question. According to this understanding, faith belongs to those who give the correct (doctrinal) answers or those who at least act morally. All others were "infidels" because they did not know the orthodox formulae or the path of orthopoiesis. My thesis does not claim to diminish the merit of either of these two responses, but intends to inscribe them in a larger sphere that

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[68] "Omnes igitur appetunt quasi ultimum finem Deo assimilari" [All things desire as their ultimate end to be made like unto God] (Thomas Aquinas, *C. Gentes* 3.19).

[69] "Deus quem amat omne quod potest amare, sive sciens sive nesciens" [O God, whom everything loves which is capable of loving, whether knowingly or unknowingly] (Augustine, *Solil.* 2.1.2 [PL 32.869]).

[70] "Nemo potest venire ad me, nisi Pater, qui misit me, traxerit eum" [No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them] (Jn 6:44).

[71] "Console-toi, tu ne me chercherais pas, si tu ne m'avais pas trouvé" [Console thyself, thou wouldst not seek me, if thou hadst not found me] (Pascal, *Pensées*, Paulist ed. [New York: Washington Square Press, 1965], 158 n. 553).

[72] "Nemo te quaerere valet, nisi qui prius invenerit" [No one is able to seek you unless he has found you already] (St. Bernard, *De dil. Deo* 7.22 [PL 182.987]).

[73] "Im menschlichen Dasein ist ein existentielles Wissen um Gott lebendig als die Frage nach 'Glück,' nach 'Heil,' nach dem Sinn von Welt und Geschichte, als die Frage nach der Eigentlichkeit des je eigenen Seins" [In human existence the existential knowledge about God lives as a search for "happiness," "salvation," a meaning to the world and history, and the authenticity of one's own being] (R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen* [Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1965], 232).

[74] "The question of God and the question of myself are identical" (R. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1960], 53). For Bultmann's theological problematic, cf. G. Hasenhüttl, *Der Glaubensvollzug* (Ludgerus: Essen, 1963), 31–61.

[75] Cf. R. Panikkar, *El silencio del Buddha* (Madrid: Siruela, 1996), 187. Now in Volume V of this *Opera Omnia*.

[76] Cf. *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979; new ed.[Bangalore: ATC, 1983), chapter 8.

includes Man as Man and not only those who know the right answers or follow the moral path, important as these are.

The essence of faith seems to me to lie in the question rather than in the answer, in the inquisitive stance, in the desire rather than in the concrete response one gives. Faith is more the existential "container" than the intellectual content of "that thing" we try to describe. It belongs not only to those who respond correctly, but to all who authentically seek, desire, love, wish—to those of "goodwill." The proper realm of faith is orthopraxis, the right actions Men believe they must perform in order to be what they believe they must be.

We have, moreover, distinguished between faith and the act of faith. The latter is the free response to faith—is Man's reaction to this capacity that instills in him the thirst for the Absolute; it is his decision to respond to the possibilities presented him in daily life or in the particularly serious moments of his existence.

If faith is an existential opening, a vital questioning, the act of faith is equally an existential response. It is, however, part of the perfection of the act of faith that it also possesses an intellectual and volitional aspect. The human response to the thirst for perfection, the desire for transcendence, the free reaction to what several schools see as an appeal from transcendence—this constitutes the act of faith.

Everybody "has" faith, every human being is endowed with this constitutive dimension; but no one is forced to live *ex fide*, out of faith or from faith.[77] Such a life characterizes the "just Man." In other words, faith is not the act of faith; the latter can be positive or negative and of different degrees of purity and intensity. Our conception of faith does not imply that Man cannot "sin" against it or perform a negative act of faith, but these are aspects of the problematic we do not need to investigate further here.[78]

Excursus on Good Faith

"Good faith" is an expression common to quite a few languages. Obviously this cannot be identified with theological faith, but we think some pertinent observations on this subject are possible in the overall problematic of the relations between *mythos* and *logos*.

Before analyzing the concept, I wish to emphasize that I am not thinking of any particular doctrine, nor shall I consider this notion as understood in Roman law or in the thought of J. P. Sartre. I refer to the simple human experience of what we still call "good faith."

Speaking of "good faith" implies there is also a "bad faith." In common parlance, "bad faith" seems to imply more reflection, more intellectualizing, more will than good faith. A ticketless traveler who is of good faith knows nothing of what the abusive (ticketless) traveler of bad faith must know. Good faith appears innocent, deprived of all knowledge. Bad faith is full of science and knowledge. Popular speech, then, invites us to interpret faith that is nonreflective as "good faith," while it calls "bad" that which recognizes itself as faith. Good faith cannot be proved.[79] If the traveler of good faith were to give too convincing a proof

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[77] Cf. Rom 3ff.

[78] This last paragraph seems necessary as a response to the query that if everybody has faith, nobody has it, or the worry that failure, tragedy, sin, damnation, and the like are not possible. They are indeed possible precisely because the act of faith is a free act.

[79] Significantly enough, this mere phenomenological analysis tallies with the later and much discussed canons 13 and 14 of the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent (1547) on Justification, which state that nobody in ordinary circumstances can be absolutely sure and have reflexive consciousness of being in the "state of grace," forgiven, predestined, and the like. "Cum nullus scire valeat certitudine

of his good faith, this very proof would accuse him of bad faith. Good faith cannot defend itself at the tribunal of reason.

In other words, reason cannot defend good faith because in so doing it profanes good faith. The only defense of good faith is its weakness before reason. In short, good faith does not support any hermeneutic. Interpreted, it ceases to be "good," that is, "pure"; it becomes adulterated by other ingredients. A faith that needs interpretation ceases to be "good faith."

Perhaps some will ask: What is the connection between this faith, apparently part of quotidian banality, and the saving faith of theologians? I would respond, first, that our effort is to bring faith down from the altitudes of a privileged monopoly and to install it on the earth of common understanding, on the level of basic human structures. Second, we certainly admit the legitimacy and truth of that aspect of faith that is intellectual, volitive, sentimental.[80] One does not exclude the other.[81] Our attempt might be summed up as a meditation on the first beatitude: "Blessed are the poor."[82]

Quite recently, reacting to a purely rationalistic, sentimental, or voluntaristic naturalism, the maximalist position has been emphasized: this attitude wishes to have nothing to do with a general concept of faith, fearing it will dilute the exigencies of "supernatural" Christian faith.[83] We understand this position well and we would almost say that because of it we take the opposite position. Faith is not the privilege of orthodox Christians but a gift, universally given to humanity. The free response to faith may be negative, but this does not mean it must be uniform or in unison.

Doubtless, as soon as good faith tries to justify itself, it begins to disintegrate: if it wants to prove its ignorance or defend its position, it automatically ceases to be good faith.[84] Good faith can be brought to light as an ingredient of all faith only from above, from the side of a faith *oculata*, as tradition says.[85] This primordial element of "good faith" implies that faith is faith in what we do not see,[86] in the future,[87] in what we do not know,[88] and

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fidei, cui non potest subesse falsum, se gratiam Dei esse consecutum" [Since no one is able to know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, whether he has obtained the grace of God] (Denz.-Schön. 1534). Cf. the famous text 1 Cor 4:4 *et etiam* Denz.-Schön. 1540, 1565–66.

[80] "Der Glaube als religiöser Akt oder religiöse Haltung ist zunächst ein Akt oder eine Haltung des ganzen Menschen . . . des Verstandes, des Willens, des Gefühls Glaube als Erkenntnis, Ueberzeugung und Bekenntnis (Bezeugung)" [Faith as a religious act or religious attitude is above all an act or attitude of the human being in its entirety . . . of reason, of the will, of the sentiment of faith as knowledge, conviction and confession (testimony)](A. Rademacher, *Die innere Einheit des Glaubens* [Bonn, 1937], 32–33).

[81] "Der Glaube ist nicht eine mysteriose supernaturale Qualität, sondern er ist die Haltung echter Menschlichkeit" [Faith is not a mysterious supernatural quality, but the attitude of authentic humanity] (R. Bultmann, *Kerygma und Mythos* [Hamburg: Reich, 1948], 1:34.

[82] Mt 5:3.

[83] Cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange and Gaudeau, cited by R. Aubert, op. cit.: 689n15ff.

[84] Cf. Rom 12:16.

[85] "Oculata fide." See Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, III, q. 55, a. 2 ad 1. er. the beautiful medieval expression, "Ipsa caritas est oculus quo videtur Deus" [Charity is the eye with which we see God] (William of St. Thierry, *De natura et dignitate amoris* 6.15 [PL 184.390]).

[86] Cf. Heb 11:27. Cf. also M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* (München: Hueber, 1956), 3:175: "Dieses Schauen im Nichtschauen, dieses Ueberzeugtsein von noch verborgener Wirklichkeit nennen wir Glauben" [This looking in not-looking, this being convinced of a reality as yet hidden, is what we call faith].

[87] Cf. Heb 11:1.

[88] "Glaube aber ist stets Ueberwindung des Aergernisses durch Gehorsam" [Faith, however, is always the overcoming of vexation through obedience] (Th. Steinbuchel, *Religion und Moral im Lichte*

also, perhaps, taking the paradox to the extreme, in what we do not believe.[89]

Good faith is unique, it has no plural.[90] The Man of good faith is not presented with two or several possibilities. He is free precisely because he does not feel constrained to choose. Rather, the Man of good faith feels chosen and elect, but not at all forced. He finds himself in a situation and he simply accepts it. His freedom does not result from deliberations on how to escape the hold of the different possibilities presented to him and that, menacing, force him in some way to decide, but it is the fruit of an inner maturation or of an unconscious spontaneity; unconscious not as such, but as regards its intellectual content or object. It is about this latter that decision is necessary. Good faith is so unitary that it permits no reflection. When, taking account of what has happened in a second moment, a Man of good faith realizes he has performed a good or bad action, he invariably discovers he *did not know* his action was good or bad.[91]

This necessary loss of "good faith" seems to be the crisis of the modern world. It is a process in which we are still plunged.[92] Good faith exists where reflection has not yet entered. It is undeniable that "science" always progresses at the expense of "faith." When faith has defended itself and become science, it has often given the impression of "bad faith," or at least of abandoning its greatest value in the face of reason, a value reason secretly envies. Thus the Christian Middle Ages had good reason to maintain that faith that could be proved ceased to be faith, since faith is faith in the invisible, the nonevident; it sees but cannot be seen.[93] *Unum idemque non potest esse scitum et creditum.*[94]

As soon as good faith submits to judgment, as soon as it becomes problematic and wishes to justify itself, to be proven, to defend itself instead of turning the other cheek,[95] it ceases to be "good faith" and becomes good (or bad) science or even "bad faith" should it insist on being called faith.[96]

The loss of good faith is necessary for two reasons. First, by virtue of the *kairos* of our culture—not only can we not march behind the progress of human history, but the forward march bears what is in the process of being produced everywhere, in every culture: the advance

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personaler christlicher Existenz [Frankfurt: Knecht-Carolusdruckerei, 1951], 115). But cf. the words of Clement of Alexandria: "Fides ergo, ut ita dicam, est brevis et compendiosa eorum quae necessaria sunt cognitio. Cognitio autem est firma ac stabilis demonstratio eorum quae assumpta sunt per fidem [Faith is, then, so to speak, an epitomized knowledge (συντομοσ . . . γνωσισ—*syntomos . . . gnosis*) of the essentials; and knowledge is a strong and sure demonstration of what is received by faith (πιστεωσ—*pisteos*)] (*Strom.* 7.10.57 [PG 9.481A]) *et etiam:* "Aristoteles autem, id, quod consequitur scientiam, judicium, quo verum esse hoc aut illud judicamus, dicit esse fidem. Est ergo fides scientia praestantior, et ejus criterium" [Aristotle says that the judgment (κριμα—*krima*) which follows scientific knowledge (επιστημη—*episteme*) by which we judge this or that to be true is faith. Accordingly, faith is scientific knowledge, and is its criterion] (*Strom.* 2.4.15 [PG 8.948A]).

[89]   Cf. Mk 9:24 and the commentaries on the passage: "In fide dubitavit," Gregory the Great, *Homilia XXVIII in Ev.*, in the Roman Breviary, at Matins, on the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catech.* 5 [PG 33.505ff.]) had already seen that faith admits of incredulity. Cf., in this regard, J. Mouroux, *L'expérience chrétienne* (Paris: Aubier, 1952), 59. Cf. the abundant modern literature on "unbelief."

[90]   Cf. E. Castelli, "Mythe et foi," in *Mythe et Foi*, ed. E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1966), 13.

[91]   Cf. Mt 25:37–40, 44–45.

[92]   It is the passage from *myth* to *logos* about which we spoke in the previous chapter.

[93]   Cf. the very profound (personalist?) passage, Heb 11:27, and the various commentaries on it, both classical and modern.

[94]   Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q. I, a. I ad 2; *C. Gentes* 1.4; etc.

[95]   Mt 5:39.

[96]   Cf. Rom 14:22ff.

of reason, reflection, and knowledge at the expense of "good faith." Knowledge is always a tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[97] Faith is the tree of life.[98]

The contemporary world is engaged not only in industry, machinery, socialization, and the intercommunication of all sorts of values, but is inexorably committed to conceptualization, to leveling, demythicizing, and to the growth of reflexive consciousness. More and more Man takes his daily existence in hand, and for this he needs to know more and more and to believe less and less. Or, better said, human knowledge advances because it usurps the domain of belief, the realm of "good faith." They were two separate trees in paradise, and separate they remain in the exile.

The second reason is even more serious because it does not belong to a fixed moment in a single culture, but to the very history of humanity. This history suggests that the peregrination of Man over the course of time corresponds to the awakening of his reflexive consciousness at the expense of his ecstatic consciousness, to the accumulation in the conscious realm of what was hidden in the unconscious, to the loss of good faith, which is replaced by science—as if, to speak theologically, the original fall were an originating fall and original sin an originating sin, which is repeated in each person and each generation in an eschatological crescendo. Man wishes to know but does not trust in God; he wishes to be like God, but does not have the patience to wait and become God. Human progress is tied to the loss of good faith. This crisis makes Man proceed, makes him gamble on what he is not.[99]

"Believe in order to understand," Christian tradition said; but it seems that once one has understood, believing is no longer necessary. Lightning rods have successfully replaced candles to St. Barbara, and antibiotics, extreme unction; the psychoanalyst supplants the spiritual director, and even γνῶσις, knowledge, is on the way to replacing πίστις, faith. Every attempt since Kant[100] to "make room for faith" has resulted in a new mutilation of its territory. Faith is the presupposition of understanding, but understanding seems to offer faith no support.

Are we at a dead-end? Is there only good or bad faith? I do not think so. There is faith that is neither good nor bad, because it is a constitutive human dimension and, theologically speaking, a redeemed faith. This is our final point.

Good faith can be saved only by recognizing it has ceased to be good and repenting of it. *Metanoia* is the condition for entering the kingdom of heaven, change of νοῦς, of mind, of direction.[101] Good faith can be saved only by recognizing that in ceasing to be "good" it is still "faith," since it has no other place to find the words of eternal life.[102] Bad faith is "bad" because it has ceased to be faith in order to become science. Bad faith does not believe: it knows. On the other hand, if Man recognizes that he has come into this world without a ticket, if he admits the fault of not having a ticket that would enable him to travel in this world without danger, if he does not seek to justify himself or say he has lost it, but simply that he does not have it—if faith does not claim to defend itself, it can be saved, not as "good" faith but as redeemed faith, as a faith that, discovering itself to be "bad," finds therein the possibility of redemption.[103]

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[97] Cf. Gen 2:9; 3:6.

[98] Cf. Gen 2:9.

[99] Cf. the reflections of R. Araud on this subject in *L'homme devant Dieu*, Mélanges H. de Lubac (Paris: Aubier, 1963), 1:127ff. Cf. also chapter 3 of this book.

[100] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, preface to the second edition (1787).

[101] Cf. Mt 3:2, etc.

[102] Cf. Jn 6:68.

[103] Is this not the only possible way of understanding the parable of Lk 18:9–14? There seems no other way out than a real forgiveness of real sins: If I "know" myself to be without sin, I am by this

The redemption of faith: this is a typical Christian problem. Christian faith is not one that wishes to supplant others. If it were only that, it would be the faith of a sect with an unjustifiable claim to universality. But this is not part of our present theme.

In reality good faith is not the *best* faith. In the final analysis it is a faith that does not know it is faith. It is an implicit faith that does not possess the element of "impurity," of evil, sin, or redemption—in short, the existentially human factor, the opening that enables faith to be fertilized by the only thing that lets it bear fruit in a saving act.[104] Good faith is "good" because it is not yet open to the air, the world, the sun, the stars. It is innocent but not existentially human. Real Man—Man as we know him—has lost his first innocence.

Whoever possesses good faith will be saved by it, but whoever knows he possesses it and trusts in his possible good faith will be accused of bad faith and voluntary incredulity by that very faith. One does not speculate with good faith. The new innocence is the fruit of redeemed faith, but not an object of the mind or of the will. It is not born of Man, but reborn of the Spirit.

Now we return to the very beginning of this meditation. It seems the only way to speak of faith, to "save" faith (some would say), is to discover its mythic character. Authentic faith, so it seems, cannot question itself. Real faith is always unsatisfied with the answer; it is always a question so virgin that it does not even know if there is an answer. So faith is a myth. But when faith is known as a myth, it appears insufficient; and yet when it ceases to be myth, it seems to vanish.

This is the dilemma. Mythic faith is good faith, but good faith does not recognize itself as mythic, nor will it claim to be. Myth is not and cannot be the object of faith because it is by its very constitution the vehicle of faith. A demythologized faith is empty, it becomes reason, changes into *logos*. Undoubtedly, good faith is a myth, but it seems that without myth, faith is not even possible.

The myth of faith is constitutively linked with the faith in myth. Thought demythologizes but life is mythopoietic. Faith also mediates here between thought and life. A myth is something we believe in without believing that we believe in it. The moment that this second degree of consciousness appears, that is, the self-reflection on belief, the myth gives way either to the *logos* or to an unbelievable mythology. Modern Western culture, which is too accustomed to manipulating ideas, parameters, and people, understandably resists accepting the absolutely nonnegotiable, nonmanipulable factors in life. But the principle of property is hardly supreme. There are things we cannot "have" because having or even intending to have them amounts to annihilating them. Faith is one of these. We cannot *have* faith the way we have money, property, or friends. We live by faith and from faith; it is always underneath or above but, like any horizon of reality, always just beyond our grasp. It flashes for a timeless instant; you know neither where it comes from nor where it goes, it lifts you from isolation, you weep with joy and find a deeper silence. And then it lets you believe in anything. "All things are possible to him who believes!"[105] What you cannot do is believe at your whim,[106] just as we cannot master the core of our own being: Who would do it? Faith is like our existence (and the two are linked): They are *gifts*, the theologian will say; they are *given*, the more reluctant philosopher might echo. It all depends on how we receive the present.

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very fact damned. If I have sinned, I am sinful. But if I am aware of sin and not of forgiveness (because in this case I am already feeling "justified"), then I may return home righteous. Real value is always spontaneous and unconscious. To pretend here is metaphysically impossible. This is what I would like to call the existential argument: one that destroys itself in the very act of its setting.

[104] Cf. Rom 11:32.

[105] Mk 9:23.

[106] But we may be able to cry, "I believe, help in my unbelief!" (Mk 9:24).

2

WITNESS AND DIALOGUE

Αναϲτααντεϲ μαρτυρεϲ αδικοι
α ουκ εγινωϲκον,
επηρωτων με

Surrexerunt testes violenti:
quorum non eram conscius,
a me quaerebant.

Violent witnesses did rise up:
on matters of which I am not conscious,
they question me.

Ps 35:11[*]

Prologue

Witness (testimony) has been considered the purest, the most sublime expression of faith. Almost all religions (in the widest sense of this word) commemorate their witnesses, their martyrs, and very often cite them as motives for credibility. In the Christian tradition the martyr is the perfect Man, the perfect imitator of the Lord.

Dialogue—the exchange of views, the encounter of beliefs on equal grounds with mutual confidence, complete frankness, and without ulterior motives—is today considered an indispensable element in the search for truth and the realization of justice. Our contemporary world feels the need to base itself on dialogue. Only dialogue makes pluralism, coexistence, democracy, even justice and peace possible. Dialogue is the essence of freedom of speech. Politically it incarnates in parliamentarianism; ecclesially it manifests in the dialogue with the "world," with "non-Christians," and even so-called nonbelievers (as the Vatican, Geneva, and Phanar testify). Contemporary ecumenism is founded on dialogue, and even evangelization cannot ignore it.[1] One could summarize the last twenty centuries of Western church history in the following kairological moments: *Witness* (until Arius), *Conversion* (until the impact

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[*] LXX and Vulgata: Ps 34. The Latin version is that of the New Psalter.

[1] Cf. the International Congress of Theology on Evangelization held in October 1971 at Nagpur, India, where the major items discussed were dialogue and development. The recent Roman Synod (October–November 1974), convened under the general title of Evangelization in the Modern World, dedicated many of its sessions to the question of dialogue.

of Islam), *Crusade* (until the discovery of America), *Mission* (until the end of the colonial era), and *Dialogue* (today).[2]

What is the relation between witness (testimony) and dialogue? Is testimony possible when we admit dialogue? At a certain point, does the witness not refuse dialogue? Don't communist and inquisitorial methods, while claiming to engage in dialogue—albeit as inter- rogation—represent a refusal of dialogue? Both the goal and the end of some dialogues seem to be the defendant's confession.

A Double Dialogue: "Early Christian" and "Modern Political"

Before analyzing the relationship between witness and dialogue in order to discover its underlying myth, we would like to show a parallel dialogue in two columns. The first (A) is between a judge and an "early Christian," and the second (B) is between a judge and a "modern political" citizen. These are presented side by side to make the differences and analogies plainly visible. We do not dramatize here, nor do we suppose the interrogators ("Judges") are in bad faith. The acts of martyrs, contemporary literature—need we do more than mention Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn?—and the history of every period furnish sufficient examples to allow this concentrated presentation.

A	B
Judge: Are you an enemy of the State? **Christian:** No.	**Judge:** Are you an enemy of the state? **Citizen:** No.
J: Well then, why don't you obey its laws? Chr: I obey my conscience.	J: Well then, why don't you obey its laws? Cit: I obey my conscience.
J: You must bow down and offer incense to the emperor. Chr: That would mean I recognize him as God.	J: Then collaborate with the state. Cit: That would mean I recognize it as omnipotent and infallible.
J: So? Chr: I recognize only one God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.	J: So? Cit: I recognize no absolute power.
J: Yes or no: Will you obey the state? Chr: Of course, but this act of adoration is not part of that obedience.	J: Yes or no: Will you obey the state? Cit: Of course, but not through a servile, blind, unconditional fear that yields only injustice.
J: Who is the judge here, the state or you? Chr: I cannot not obey God. . . .	J: Who is the judge here, the state or you? Cit: I cannot not obey my conscience.
J: According to your personal interpreta- tion? Chr: According to my faith.	J: According to your personal interpreta- tion? Cit: According to my convictions.
J: Then you divinize yourself. Chr: I obey Caesar in his own domain.	J: Then you consider yourself above the state? Cit: I obey the state in its own domain.

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[2] Cf. my chapter "Christianity and World Religions," in *Christianity* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), 78–127, esp. 85–98.

J: And you decide what that is.

Chr: I follow Jesus Christ, and his teachings do not permit idolatry.

J: We don't ask much, not even what you believe. Just submit to the law: Sacrifice at the altar in honor of the emperor.

Chr: In whose name?

J: The emperor's.

Chr: I obey God before Caesar.

J: Don't you see this is sheer obstinacy?

Chr: I pray only to have the strength to remain truthful.

J: Don't you realize your behavior is irrational?

Chr: Why?

J: As a result of this small act, you will suffer greatly and then die.

Chr: True life is not on earth.

J: Can't you understand we seek your own good? We just want to make you see your mistake.

Chr: Mistake?

J: Just this: if you want to realize your ideal, you need to live in order to convince others you have the truth.

Chr: Merely existing is not the supreme value. Besides, arguments cannot persuade anyone to believe; this is the work of grace.

J: But dead you can do nothing.

Chr: You cannot kill real life.

J: You're just a fanatic.

Chr: Not at all.

J: Yes! You refuse dialogue.

Chr: We're obviously not talking about the same thing.

J: Have you anything to add?

Chr: God is my witness: I follow my conscience and Jesus Christ.

J: History will prove you wrong.

Chr: You're not the judge of history.

J: In any case history is on our side.

Chr: Small victory: There is a Providence that will judge even you, since you ignore truth.

J: And you decide what that is.

Cit: I stand by the human—or humanist, if you prefer—tradition of personal dignity.

J: No one wants to strip you of your dignity. We only want to reeducate you, destroy this ill-fated individualism and pride in thinking yourself truthful.

Cit: In whose name?

J: The party's. That means the people, men like me. You know very well that the will of the people and truth manifest themselves in the process the party incarnates.

Cit: No, I don't believe that.

J: Don't you see this is sheer obstinacy?

Cit: I'm tempted to say the same thing to you.

J: Don't you see that such individual behavior is an aberration?

Cit: Why?

J: Because it means chaos, because the group must determine what is truth; only the group counts.

Cit: So?

J: So realistically speaking, the group wants to rehabilitate you, it invites you to collaborate with its goals and admit your mistakes. We want only your good.

Cit: You want only the group's good, chopping off the true fulfillment of the human person.

J: But you're part of this collectivity. This is what gives you all your rights.

Cit: But the group is not necessarily uniform. . . .

J: No, but it is united. . . .

Cit: To accomplish goals that are not convincing and stifle the human being.

J: Then your selfishness condemns yourself and excommunicates you from the community. You are a blind fanatic.

Cit: I should like to speak with this community.

J: What is truth?

Chr: Our Master did not answer this question.

J: And you?

Chr: The disciple is not above his Master.

J: Let's leave these speculations. Give witness of your submission to Caesar.

Chr: I bear witness to my faith which is action, a way of life more than a doctrine or an interpretation.

J: That's just sectarian fanaticism talking.

Chr: I believe in Jesus Christ.

J: But this Christ did not forbid you to obey Caesar.

Chr: I witness to truth. . . .

J: Abstract.

Chr: Concrete.

J: Which?

Chr: Christ.

J: He, it seems, would prevent you from being an ordinary citizen.

Chr: He taught us to reject idolatry.

J: One last effort: Interpret this any way you wish, but render public witness to the emperor.

J: To refuse means death.

Chr: No, it means real witness.

J: To whom?

Chr: To God.

J: Who is it?

J: All your life it has listened to you and now has handed you over to us. No one would listen to you: they might put you in an asylum.

Cit: I would still like to explain my point of view.

J: What good is it to listen to a madman? Would you like to answer once again?

Cit: Let me be heard by witnesses.

J: History will witness against you.

Cit: You're not the judge of history.

J: More than you are in any case.

Cit: Only because you are in power.

J: Because we are right and know the truth.

Cit: What is truth?

J: The will and welfare of the people.

Cit: But who determines this?

J: The people themselves.

Cit: I believe in something less volatile, more stable and solid.

J: That's just religious fanaticism talking.

Cit: I don't believe in God.

J: But you do believe in something that goes above and beyond the group.

Cit: I witness to truth. . . .

J: Abstract.

Cit: Concrete.

J: Which?

Cit: My conscience.

J: We'll have to reeducate it.

Cit: By force?

J: One last effort: help us to reeducate you.

Cit: That would betray my convictions.

J: Very well. To refuse means death.

Cit: No, it means real witness.

J: To whom?

Cit: To man.

J: Who is it?

Thesis: Testimony Is Possible Only in a Mythic Communion

These two colloquies, which in a certain sense represent the beginning and the end of a historical era, illustrate my thesis concerning witness in our time of dialogue: *testimony is possible only in a mythic communion*. Only this mythic communion—participation in a common myth—makes testimony possible. Outside the horizon provided by a common myth, testimony becomes meaningless. Further, we perceive this preexistent mythic communion only when dialogue is ruptured or when testimony produces dialogue.

To illuminate our thesis, we will divide it into three parts:

Testimony is only possible if there is an *audience*, that is, somebody to witness to (the witnessed) distinct from the witness. So testimony is essentially a relation, but not a dialectical one. Neither is it mere dialogue in the traditional sense of the word. It is one element of the *dialogical dialogue*, but even this does not exhaust it.

Testimony belongs to the order of myth, not of *logos*. Strictly speaking, you bear witness to a loyalty, not to a truth.

The direct intention to witness destroys the force of the testimony. Further, any hermeneutic of the testimony by the witness makes it vanish. One cannot be a witness and an exegete at the same time. Should the witness try, however, and should a semblance of his testimony still remain, this would rather be confession. A witness does not bear witness to himself, whereas a confessor confesses his belief.

Semantic Reflections

Before developing these three points, we shall situate the problem with a few semantic reflections. "Testimony" and words from the same root come from the Latin *testimonium*, which derives from *testis*, that is, *tri-stans*, literally he who "stands for the third," he who can really witness, attest, give evidence because he is an impartial third party outside the litigations.[3]

On the other hand, the Greek μαρτυσ (*martys*) gives primacy to the anthropological, as opposed to the juridical, dimension. Μαρτυσ relates to μερμηρα (*mermera*, anguish, care, anxiety), and μερμεροσ (*mermerizo*, preoccupied, concerned, anxious), μερμεροσ (*mermeros*, requiring much deliberation), μερμιναω (*merimnao*, to think, meditate, be anxious for), μερμινα (*merimna*, anxiety, thought), and μερμιπω (*mermairo*, to consider, reflect, deliberate).

The underlying Indo-European root is *sme-r* (*mer-*), which means to reflect, think, remember, take care of, be anxious, recollect (cf. in Sanskrit *smṛti*: that which one entrusts to memory, i.e., tradition).[4] The root is also connected with *men* (cf. μενω, *meno*), to think, remain (cf. in Sanskrit *manas*, in Latin *mens* and *manere*).[5] The Anglo-Saxon word *witness* also springs from the order of knowledge (*wit*, *wisdom*).[6]

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[3] Cf. also *testamentum*, testament, *testificari*, to give evidence, to certify, *testari*, to attest, etc. Cf. C. D. Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), *s.v. witness* (§21.23), 1435–36. The riches of this root include giving meaning to context, detest, protest, testament, etc., as well as testicle (witness to virility). See, e.g., E. Partridge's English etymological dictionary *Origins*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan-Paul, 1966).

[4] Cf. also the Latin *memor*, *memoria*, *mora*; the old German *mornen*; and the English *mourn*.

[5] Cf. J. B. Hofmann, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen* (München: Oldenbourg, 1966), *sub hac voce*. H. Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-veda* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1964), col. 1614, for *smr* and *smar* in the sense of remember, memory, think, recollect. It also appears with the prefixes *anu* and *prati*, although the root appears only rarely in the Rig Veda, etc.

[6] Cf. C. T. Onions, *the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (1966; Oxford: Clarendon Press,

Following its etymology and history, we reach the following description:[7]

Μαρτυρία, witness (*martyria*, testimony) is the act or result of witnessing, of attesting, giving evidence of a conviction one holds, about which one cares, which one recollects and for which one is concerned. The witness knows, understands, recollects, is anxious for, concerned about; he thinks, considers, is preoccupied with what he will manifest to another in his testimony.

To testify then would be the act of "recollecting" in one's own "thought" through "concern" for that very reality to which one bears witness. Contrary to what one might think, neither the word "witness" nor "testimony" denotes an existential or volitional attitude, but both are clearly rooted in the order of the intellect, the memory, thought. Nor do the words suggest action or will; rather they belong to the realm of consciousness. Now consciousness has at times been hastily identified with the *logos*; myth also belongs here and with full rights. We want to show that the character of testimony is to reveal myth. Myth reveals itself in dialogue just as the *logos* liberates itself in dialectics.

We end these considerations now to study the problematic of witness (testimony) in the particular and precise viewpoint of our thesis.[8]

Testimony as a Relation

The fact that testimony implies a *mythic communion* between the witness and the witnessed (audience) means, in the first place, that testimony entails a special relationship between the act of witnessing and the witnessed (audience). By *witnessing* we mean the witness in the act of testifying; by *witnessed* or *audience* the one to whom the witness testifies, the one who recognizes, in order to accept or reject, the witness and his testimony. We must distinguish *witness*, the *audience*, and the *testimony*—the last being the contents or meaning, that is, what the witness testifies. The audience is the one for whom the witness discloses himself as such. The audience means a person, a fact, the object on whose behalf one testifies (God, truth, an event, a friend, etc.)—even what or who receives and recognizes the testimony of the witness (the judge, society, humanity, a group, the future, etc.). We shall try to be as precise as possible in order to avoid confusion and so use witness to mean almost exclusively the one who gives the testimony; exceptions to this usage will be clearly indicated.

Above all, testimony is a relation. It occurs whenever a witness is recognized as testifying to something by an audience. In the final analysis, the audience must recognize the witness or there is no witnessing; at the very least the witness must believe in the existence of an audience. Without this recognition (between the witness and the audience)—be it mutual or only unilateral—witnessing is not possible. The *testis*, "the third," is essential to testimony, even when removed from the juridical sphere; a third part is also necessary in

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1967), *sub voce*. See the Latin *videre*, to see and the Sanskrit *veda* ; see, understand, know, *vidyā*, knowledge, etc. The witness is he who knows (cf. the German *wissen*).

[7] Cf. also H. Strathmann, in Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kolhammer, 1932), *sub hac voce*; J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1930; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), *sub his vocibus*; G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), for the use of these words by the patristic fathers, 838ff., etc.

[8] For some information supplementary to the bibliography given in Strathmann, op. cit. See also B. Trepanier, "Contribution à une recherche sur l'Idée de témoin dans les écrits johanniques," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 15 (1945): 5–63. I. de la Poterie, "La notion de témoignage dans Saint Jean," in *Sacra Pagina*, ed. J. Duculot (Gembloux, 1959), 11:193–208; A. Vanhoye, "Témoignage et vie en Dieu selon le quatrième évangile," *Cristus* (April 1965): 16, 155–71.

the anthropological order of knowledge for testimony to exist as such. The witness is not someone who knows something, but one who communicates this something to another. Witnessing is a phenomenon of the third power (witnessing, audience, testimony), reflexive consciousness of the second (knowing and known), and immediate perception a phenomenon of the first (the perceived).

Not Dialectical

Now this relation between witnessing and the audience is not dialectical, that is, it does not derive from the order of the *logos*. By the order of the *logos* we understand that epistemologically verifiable domain of consciousness, the critical realm.[9] Could the witness testify via the *logos*, he would be an expert, a lawyer, a savant, a sophist, or a sage, but not a witness. If you can prove with reason or furnish evidence, you are not, strictly speaking, testifying; you are not witnessing but demonstrating. You do not testify to a geometric theorem; you prove it. You do not testify to a mathematical axiom; you postulate it. You do not testify to some fact accessible to others; you point it out. You do not testify to acquired knowledge; you indicate it. You testify only to what is inaccessible to the audience outside the testimony itself. The witness has an inherent authority that is at once his strength and his weakness. You cannot criticize the witness by attacking his testimony as such, that is, by an internal principle of verification except, of course, self-contradiction. You must be content with extrinsic criteria: The witness is honest, loyal, intelligent; he has reasons or motives for his testimony, and so forth.

Testimony does not present the structure of *A is B* or *A is not B*. Its form is rather *M says that A is B* or *M is in favor of A is B* (or their respective negatives). There is an element that escapes dialectics, an element that is not of the order of the *logos*, the logic-al realm. There is no need to testify when the other can experience or confirm the testimony by himself—although very often the higher human experiences are inaccessible except through the mediation of a witness. The tutor or the teacher demonstrates, proves, communicates learning; he makes one aware of new facts or helps uncover previously hidden relations; but he does not bear witness, or rather he witnesses only insofar as the students are not able to realize by themselves what he is *instructing*. The instructor is a dialectician, not a witness. On the other hand, the true master is one who testifies to something the disciple cannot yet obtain by himself. One can testify to transcendence, vertical as well as horizontal: the ultimate place of testimony is not dialectics. In this realm, testimony is only provisional and must give way to reasons verifiable by the intellect.

Strictly speaking, the interface between dialectics (that acquired through critical knowledge) and testimony (that requiring the mediation of a witness in order to be accepted) cannot be defined a priori. Without the witness of the ancestors, elders, scholars, wise men, and saints, human life would remain banal. It is through authentic martyrs—through witnesses—in every field that humanity does not wander aimlessly but journeys toward a positive eschatology. The master testifies to the invisible in the hope that eventually his testimony will become superfluous, that one day we shall see face-to-face.

In any case, testimony does not belong to dialectics.

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[9] Cf. *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979; new ed. Bangalore: ATC, 1983), chapter 10.

Not Merely Dialogical

Witnessing certainly implies a relation, but not one of mere dialogue in the sense of dialogue as a dialectical tool. As long as dialogue is dialectical, that is, an intellectual arena where one contends by means of reason to confront the adversary, testimony has no place in it. As long as the dialectical dialogue remains open, as long as one continues to inquire, to question oneself but to admit only reason, dialogue does not allow any witness to testify, for the witness testifies precisely to something that escapes the grasp of dialectics. Otherwise witnessing is out of place. This is why testimony always takes the form of an apodictic affirmation (or negation): "This is what happened," "These are the facts," "I state or swear this," "I attest this," *non possumus*, and so on. The witness ends, shatters, dialectical dialogue by placing himself on what he believes to be another level. His testimony uncovers depths that de facto pure dialectics or simple dialectical dialogue do not achieve. To every dialectical argument, he responds that things are a certain way because this is how he has heard, seen, experienced, or believed them. The witness also ultimately takes exception to dialectical dialogue: he does not remain indefinitely involved in dialogue, but declares that he has a different source of knowledge that forces him to give testimony to what he believes to be true.

Testimony ends dialectical dialogue, and in turn, such dialogue allows no room for witnessing. As long as the process is open, as long as the dialogue goes on, no testimony is possible because there is no witnessing nor any audience, but only partners in dialogue, equally open to each other in a confrontation that accepts only the constraint of logic. Each one is seeking; there is no room here for the apodictic affirmation of testimony that, when it comes, can only either be dismissed or end such dialogue. The place of testimony is at the end of the dialogue and so finishes any dialogue. But when do we know that there is no longer place for dialogue or that there is the time for accepting the witness?

Now the dialectical dialogue is not the only, nor even the most important, form of dialogue. Discovering the capital importance of dialogical dialogue represents an important cultural mutation in our times.[10] Until recently dialogue has been mainly a dialectical tool; now, disengaged from dialectics, it has its own justification. This dialogue is neither a tool nor a *pis-aller*, that is, a purely extrinsic aid that acts as a catalyst to invigorate my introspection. Dialogical dialogue is not the external reinforcement of a monologue in the belief that "two heads are better than one." Dialogue here is not like procedure of the "great executive's" subordinates whose critical collaboration enables their boss to deploy his best dialectical skills. In its critical form it is a novelty of contemporary culture, and it befits the *kairos* of our times to have liberated dialogue from the tutelage of dialectics. No longer does dialogue necessarily belong to dialectics; hence it does not exist to convert another, to evangelize;[11] it is not merely a method to know the other and his point of view, nor is it a better test of his dialectical skill. Dialogue is, fundamentally, opening myself to another so that he might speak and reveal my myth that I cannot know by myself because it is transparent to me, self-evident. Dialogue is a way of knowing myself and of disentangling my own point of view from other viewpoints

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[10] Cf. the dialogue between Heidegger and a Japanese: "Ein Sprechen *von* der Sprache könnte nur ein Gespräch sein" [Speaking *about* language could only be dialogue], M. Heidegger, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 150. Cf. also *"Dialectik* weist zurück auf den Dialog und kennzeichnet die Methode des dialogischen Denkens," *RGG* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1958), 11:167.

[11] "We reject the idea that dialogue is by itself a means to evangelization," is found in the final declaration of the Nagpur Conference cited above, although the editing committee took the liberty (!) of eliminating this sentence approved by the entire Congress—perhaps because of the ambiguity of "evangelization."

and from me, because it is grounded so deeply in my own roots as to be utterly hidden from me. It is the other who through our encounter awakens this human depth latent in me in an endeavor that surpasses both of us. In authentic dialogue this process is reciprocal. Dialogue sees the other not as an extrinsic, accidental aid, but as the indispensable, personal element in our search for truth, because I am not a self-sufficient, autonomous individual. In this sense, dialogue is a religious act par excellence because it recognizes my *religatio* to another, my individual poverty, the need to get out of myself, transcend myself, in order to save myself.

Dialogue seeks truth by trusting the other, just as dialectics pursues truth by trusting the order of things, the value of reason and weighty arguments. Dialectics is the optimism of reason. Dialogue is the optimism of the heart. Dialectics believes it can approach truth by relying on the objective consistency of ideas. Dialogue believes it can advance along the way to truth by relying on the subjective consistency of the dialogical partners. Dialogue does not seek to be primarily *duo-logus*, a duet of two *logoi*, which could still be dialectical—but a *dia-logos*, a piercing of the *logos* to attain a truth that transcends it.

We call this *dialogical dialogue* and we add that the relational nature of all witnessing belongs to this dialogue.

Now the problematic is more complex since this mutation in the concept of dialogue corresponds to a certain mutation in the concept of the testimony. If dialogue is more than a dialectical technique, it cannot dispense with a certain testimony, that is, with the nonapodictic testimony of the other that communicates his experience and does not merely criticize my views. Without this testimony we cannot establish the true dialogue we have described. If I can learn some new truth on my own, even if eventually helped by another, I do not yet leave the territory of dialectics and my partner is only a critic. But if I cannot know my own myth, cannot discover my own prejudices, and above all cannot recognize my presuppositions by myself, then I need the arguments and criticisms of my partner as well as his testimony. His testimony says to me (without proof until we share a common language and homogeneous categories) that there are other points of view, other possibilities, that what is self-evident to me may not be to another. This new sort of dialogue can proceed only by mutually integrating our testimonies within a larger horizon, a new myth.[12] What the other bears is not a critique of my ideas but witness to his own experience, which then enters our dialogue, flows with it, and awaits a new fecundation.

Where this dialogue today is perhaps most plausible, most delicate and also difficult—but most necessary—is between religious traditions, between worldviews, and between ideologies. The working attitude of this dialogue is fundamentally different from that of dialectical dialogue. The Christian will speak with the Buddhist, for example, not to convert or merely to know *him* but to better understand himself in the radical sense of an understanding that goes far beyond a simple development or a broadened outlook on oneself or one's religion. He approaches the Buddhist to integrate on a new horizon human experiences that until the dialogue were irreconcilable, inscribed on different skylines, and that permitted the game of dialectics only as a second instance.[13]

There are then different kinds of dialogue, just as there are different kinds of testimony. There is dialectical dialogue and the "monological" witness who refuses all dialogue. But

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[12] We could compare this with what H.-G. Gadamer says about *Horizontverschmelzung* as the process of understanding in *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1972), 289–90, 375, etc.

[13] Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), now in Volume VI, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

there is also dialogical dialogue and the dialogical witness who welcomes dialogue, both barely experienced on the global scale in which they present themselves today as one of the greatest challenges of our times.[14] Dialogical dialogue accepts the witness of the other and together with him seeks to integrate this testimony in a new experience no less concrete but more universal than the original starting point.

Sui Generis

Nevertheless, witnessing cannot be reduced to a component of dialogue. It presents its own consistency over and above any dialogue. We have no guarantee that the witness accepts the rules of the game of dialogue—even of dialogical dialogue. There is a "divine madness," a "foolishness of the cross" in most religions.

Doubtless there are pathological forms of witnessing, just as there are diabolical and fanatical forms that refuse all dialogue and any analysis; but history and experience show—no need to cite the *Phaedrus*[15]—that there are authentic forms of witnessing that do not spring from dialogue and cannot be inscribed in the dialogical process. We might call them revelatory forms: They reveal a transcendent message and bear their own authority. One hears, loves, and accepts them or one ignores, hates, and refuses them. They have nothing to do with dialogue; wanting to "co-opt" them dialogically would vulgarize, deform, and finally destroy them. Francis of Assisi could not give reasons for his message any more than Camus's stranger could testify to his innocence. Jesus spoke with the Roman and Gentile Pilate, but was silent before his compatriot and fellow-believer Herod, with whom he shared not only the same idioms but the same language.

Wanting to master the witness, to reduce his testimony to dialectics or even to dialogue, suffocates the Spirit, straitjackets the freedom of God and Man. Wanting to dictate the rules of witnessing, to manipulate its reality, may succeed for a while until asses[16] and even stones[17] begin to testify!

To be sure, testimony enables dialogue to be more than a mere dialectical strategy; on the other hand, it is no less true that the witness constantly challenges dialogue and only in certain cases does he allow dialogue to continue without destroying it. But testimony is not a simple provisional working hypothesis. Even in the most perfect form of dialogue, the witness will not be accepted if his testimony does not present a certain homogeneity indispensable to dialogue, a mythic homogeneity. This needs to be analyzed more precisely.

The Relation between the Witness and the Audience

We have said that the relation between the witness and the witnessed, the audience, is a relation sui generis. It is neither dialogical nor dialectical, but rather mythical. It arises from a mythic communion: Testimony makes sense only to those who share a common myth, and it is precisely this myth to which the witness testifies. The crisis that today confronts

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[14] When I initially wrote these lines (1972), Josef Cardinal Mindszenty was just arriving in Rome after twenty-three years of seclusion. Was he to be considered a martyr for having refused dialectical dialogue or will history judge him a failed witness who refused dialogical dialogue? Cf. his subsequent (and foreseeable) conflicts with the Roman milieu.

[15] 244a ff.

[16] Cf. Num 22:28ff.

[17] Cf. Lk 19:40.

testimony from every side is not due to a lack of convinced people or a lack of heroism, but more properly to the crumbling of traditional communal myths. The testimony's very foundation—the myth held in common by the witness and his audience—is disappearing. For example, the Christian priest used to witness to the ongoing process of redemption. The witnesses are still there, but their testimony is scarcely visible; they have ceased to witness because that particular myth of the Church that made their witnessing possible no longer holds. The anticlericalists of last century arose precisely in countries of traditional beliefs because people thought that priests were giving a bad or even a false testimony of what they still believed the Church to be. Today people no longer discuss what kind of witnesses priests are, because they no longer recognize the context—the myth—of the Church within which the testimony of priests was inscribed. The context having changed, anticlericalism today makes no sense. To give another example: Today we are undergoing not a crisis of patriotism, but the dissolution of the myth of the fatherland that heretofore made a certain patriotism positively or negatively meaningful.

Indeed, for the testimony to exist, the witness must be able to testify to someone and have this receiver, the audience, receive his testimony. This person need not be a judge or someone actually present in favor of the witness or not; the audience can be God, society, history, the future, and so on. But someone must be *there* to receive the testimony; the witness proclaims his testimony to *him*. To live in the presence of God, for example, means to take him as witness of our actions and to be able to say, "I do not receive glory from Men."[18]

In any case there must be a certain communication, even a certain communion, between the witness and the audience. Authentic witnessing begins when the audience recognizes that the witness is actually testifying, affirming, revealing, uncovering, manifesting, something not given in either a dialectical relation (in argument) or a dialogical one (in trusting the other).

In certain cases, it may be that the audience exists in the mind of the witness alone, but this does not contradict our thesis. There will be no actual witnessing until an audience appears; yet the witness can be an authentic *witness* because he believes in the existence of an audience.

One accepts (or rejects) the witness when one enters into a mythic communion with him and accepts (or rejects) his testimony to the degree of this communion. The first Christian martyrs, for instance, testified to the truth of Christianity for Christians of subsequent generations; they testified to the strength of their convictions or their faith for historians of religion; they testified to their fanaticism or their blindness for Marxist or Maoist adepts. Testimony appears only at the level of the audience's communion of myth with the witness; the latter testifies only to something we ourselves can accept as attestable. Witnesses testify to miracles to the extent that the audience believes in miracles; otherwise they testify to their superstition and gullibility.[19] Christ's resurrection was pondered, proven, and attested to by the primitive church in exact proportion to one's belief in the possibility of resurrection. Christian witnesses repeat the same thing for twenty centuries, but we accept them only to the extent that we share a common myth with them.[20] Contemporary theological reflection on Jesus's resurrection provides a striking instance. We accept as authentic the witnessing of the early Christians insofar as we believe in what they testified to, and this belief is provided by the mythical horizon we still hold in common with them.[21]

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[18] Cf. Jn 5:41 (after acknowledging that the Scriptures bore witness to him).

[19] Cf. Lk 16:31: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." Cf. also Jn 5:46–47 for a similar problematic.

[20] Cf. Section II, Chapter 1 for the problematic of fundamental theology today.

[21] Cf. 1 Cor 15:13: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised."

Be this as it may, you witness to a loyalty, not a truth. The witness does not need to reveal a hitherto unknown truth—which would always remain foreign and incomprehensible—but a loyalty to a certain situation we may already know. In the example we gave earlier, the Christian martyr witnesses to the Christian "truth" to Christians, to the "truth" of heroic courage to historians of religion, and to the "truth" that religion is the opium of the people and the enemy of progress to Marxist and Maoist ideological adepts. In each case we admit witnessing to a loyalty—to something we believe to be the case.

In general, the witness has been studied within the framework of a specific context—precisely because a witness makes sense only within one context. As long as we live in a given culture, in a particular mythical context or a particular horizon of intelligibility and experience, we are not aware that our witness makes absolutely no sense outside this given horizon.[22] The task of our epoch is to expand this horizon to include a transcultural perspective as well. Only then shall we become aware that each concrete witnessing does not have universal meaning.

It is in fact the notable silence of witnesses today that leads us to discover our broken myths and prompts us to reconsider the true unity of humanity on a broader basis.

We have said that the place of the witness is within a mythic communion. Witnessing belongs indeed to the realm of consciousness, but not at the level of the *logos*. One could almost assume, by process of elimination, that what remains in consciousness and is not *logos* is myth. But here we are not concerned to argue semantics. We could call myth that invisible common horizon that allows communication.

To recapitulate, we might say that there is no testimony without a hermeneutic of that testimony by an audience. This hermeneutic implies a common horizon we have called the mythic communion between the witness and the audience. Otherwise the would-be witness is sent to an asylum for the insane.

Interpreting the Witness

One characteristic of a genuine witness already discovered in the light of what we have said is that the hermeneutic necessary to accept his testimony comes from the audience and not from the witness.

To clarify our thesis, we would add that voluntary manipulation of the testimony by the witness would invalidate the testimony. The true witness bears testimony in spite of himself, without intending to, strictly speaking. He bears witness knowingly, but he does not testify for the purpose of witnessing. He witnesses because he is compelled to do so, impelled to give witness, so to speak, by his conviction and the power of the truth in which he believes.[23] It is the audience that discovers the testimony of the witness. The reflective consciousness that may elicit in me the will to testify would destroy the value of the testimony, for then it would no longer represent the irruption of something higher, the rupture of endless dialogue or the overstepping of a dialectical argument incapable of reaching any conclusion. It would no longer represent the epiphany of a *testis*, a third, but the deliberate influence on a second, that is, a proof presented to an audience. In this way, testimony becomes dialectics or dialogue, or worse yet, didactic; but it disappears as testimony. It becomes sophistry.

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[22] These days we have striking—often tragic—examples of congregations and other religious groups that, sincerely tired of propaganda and activism, feel themselves called to a humble, silent testimony, unaware that their testimony does not exist and is even revolting outside the mythical boundaries of a culture where the concrete values of testimony are still accepted.

[23] Cf. 1 Cor 9:16–17: "For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! . . . I am entrusted with a commission."

I do not really testify to any authentic love for my neighbor if I love him in order to bear witness of this love to him or anyone else—my friends or my brothers. I do not testify to a true love, if I love someone, in order to bear witness of my obedience or my loyalty to God. I do not bear witness to the truth of my faith if I proclaim it in order to be a witness. In other words, the witness cannot intend to witness without becoming inauthentic. Of course, falsehood is also possible here. As long as the audience believes the testimony of the witness, he bears true witness—*ex opere operantis*—but he ceases to do so when the audience discovers that he—rather than the testimony itself—intends to speak, to bear witness.

In fact, the will to bear witness implies wanting to show, to prove the truth of my witness to another, to convince him, to convert him because I myself am convinced that the contents of my testimony are proper for him too. By this very fact I cease to be a witness, because my testimony ceases to be the testimonial of a third, the affirmation of a conviction, the expression of a concern, the manifestation of something within, that one cherishes in itself and for oneself, the spontaneous epiphany of an experience. Instead it becomes a conscious act that intends to make the other share my convictions; the purpose is no longer the passive blossoming of a grace that the audience freely discovers, but the active communication of a value I consider proper for others. The motive is no longer in the "thing" testified (the testimony itself), but in the reason one wishes to testify.[24]

So we can shift the emphasis of witnessing, and this displacement changes its nature and transforms it into a duty—a charitable act and the like, depending upon how we interpret it. The intention to bear witness implies that you are convinced not only of your "truth" but also of its value for another. Moreover, this value does not consist in the truth of the testimony per se, but in its utility for the audience to whom one intends to testify. It is justified, then, in pragmatic terms and not by virtue of the demands that genuine witnessing itself makes; you have the audience in mind. A good doctor—one who is a living witness to medical knowledge—prescribes a remedy or a treatment not to testify to the efficacy but to cure the patient. An honest lawyer argues a case not to testify to his debating skill but to obtain justice for his client. True social service does its job not to testify to the superiority of the society that commissions it or the techniques it uses, but to assist in a concrete human situation. The businessman does not testify to the excellence of his enterprise, he seeks to convince the buyer of the utility of his merchandise or services.[25]

A simple example serves to reinforce what we have been developing: As is evident in any courtroom, testimony that considers the effects it will have on others by this very fact loses value. A witness who testifies only when his testimony is agreeable to his ideas or friends loses credibility as a witness.[26]

We might go further still and assert that any hermeneutic by the witness himself destroys his testimony. If the left hand knows what the right hand is doing . . .[27] Indeed, many passages

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from the Gospel fit here;[28] the parable of the Pharisee and the publican is another example.[29] If, having understood the parable, the Pharisee no longer boasts of his fasting nor proclaims how good he considers himself to be nor judges the publican because he fears the parable's condemnation, he is twice cursed. If, in turn, the publican proclaims himself a sinner knowing he will thereby be justified, he shall be twice cast out. As the text adds,[30] this means that whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. But if you accuse and abase yourself in order to be pardoned and raised up, you will find neither pardon nor honor. We cannot escape this impasse by dint of reflection or willpower. We cannot manipulate faith, nor dispose of myth at will or by thought.

We bear witness to something we cannot indicate in any other way or prove by reason; that is why witnessing engages the entire life of the witness. We bear witness not by reason or sentiment, but through our life. Ultimately we can bear witness only with our life. Now, life is given to be lived, that is, to be given up, and as we pass on this gift we also give life, transmit, continue, immortalize it.[31] Do we mean by all this that reflecting on one's life is inherently inauthentic? An instance of original sin in Man?[32] Are we not saying that interpreting one's life as witness destroys its authenticity? What shall we think then of Christ who said, "For this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth"?[33]

Certainly I can know my life bears witness in the sense that I am aware that I communicate what I have seen, experienced, or realized, and can be expressed only in lived testimony.[34] But when I lose sight of the third party testifying in and through me, when I fall back on myself as a witness, I destroy my testimony. In this sense Christ said, "If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true; there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears me is true."[35]

Does this constant prayer, in one form or another, "thy will be done,"[36] "not as I will, but as thou wilt,"[37] not characterize an authentic life? Is liberation not primarily liberation from the ego? We do not witness in or by our life except as an expression of loyalty to a "third," to the Spirit, however we may call it, which alone enables us to say that a higher power guides us.[38] Or again, to express this with profound wisdom:

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[28] Cf. Mt 6:1–6, 17–20; Mk 13:9–13; or also Lk 21:12–15: "You will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict."

[29] Cf. Lk 18:9–14.

[30] Cf. Lk 18:14; Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11.

[31] This phrase would like to express what the historian of religions would call heaven, grace, liberation, salvation, immortality.

[32] This is an idea current in the history of religions, most recently revived by the late R. C. Zaehner, *The Convergent Spirit* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 44ff.

[33] Jn 18:37. Cf. *etiam* 3:11.

[34] In the same sense one could cite A. Gide, "Chaque être est né pour témoigner" [Every being was born to bear witness . . .] (*Attendu que* . . . [Paris: Chariot, 1943], 109) (*apud* P. Robert, *Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* [Paris: Nouveau Littre-Le Robert, 1969], 6.494).

[35] Jn 5:31–32. Cf. *etiam* 5:33–34.

[36] Mt 6:10, etc.

[37] Mt 26:39, etc.

[38] Cf. Jn. 4:34; 6:38; etc.

By whom it is unthought, by him it is thought;
By whom it is thought, he does not see.
Not understood by whom it is known;
Understood by whom it is not known.[39]

This is not paradox but literal truth: The mystery of life is not understood by those who understand it or think they understand it. Just as understanding the mystery destroys it, understanding Reality renders it inauthentic; it is no longer incomprehensible but understood only in a limited way. What is understood is not Reality at all, but the object of understanding. Nor is the mystery of life truly understood by those who understand they cannot understand it; not by the Pharisees of the intellect (even if they call themselves philosophers); nor by those aware of their ignorance, who understand their ignorance or understand that they do not understand. Rather, it is understood by those who really do not understand—and in not understanding, do not understand that they do not understand. Only infinite ignorance is a blessing. This is why it was later proclaimed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."[40]

In brief, the hermeneutic belongs to the audience, not to the witness. Some will then discover that this hermeneutic is itself a testimony the audience has given without being aware of it. Thus life continues in the encounter of witnesses. Our thesis says that the witness exists only in the framework of a mythic communion with the audience, and so it goes on. It is history as dialogue. A witness arises, and the acceptance or refusal of his testimony penetrates as if by osmosis into human experience to the extent that the witness lives in communion with Man.

Witness and Myth

The place of the witness is in myth. When we live in the same myth, we are open and receptive to the witness. Truth must be proven or demonstrated according to its intrinsic evidence. Witnessing to anything belonging to the order of the *logos* is out of place, although such "deplacement" constitutes one of life's tensions. Intellectual authority is only for those who have not yet discovered the logical character of the truth proclaimed by authority. The *logos* properly functions in dialectics.

Today dialogue distinguishes itself from dialectics and seeks to accept the witness. In thus accepting the witness in dialogue, we seek to reintroduce testimony into the realm of the *logos*. If we do not succeed, dialogue will not proceed further; but if we succeed, we shall continue to search dialectically and dialogically, the more enriched by the various witnesses. In this process there are martyrs and conversions, bungled dialogues and successful syntheses; ancient myths crumble and are demythicized; others, more meaningful, arise and penetrate humanity. We pass from myth to *logos*; we enrich the second, we change the first but we do not exhaust it.

So testimony itself stands in a dialectical relation with dialogue. On the one hand, it nourishes dialogue by the contributing witnesses; on the other hand, testimony represents the end of dialogue, because as long as it offers testimony and only that, it remains impenetrable to the *logos*.

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[39] *KenU* II.3.

[40] Mt 5:3. One could also translate: "Blessed those who are poor through the Spirit." Cf. *etiam*, "for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Lk 12:40).

3

MYSTERIUM

"Questioning is the piety [*Frömmigkeit*] of Thinking," as Heidegger used to say, but there is also a "Mystery of piety"[1] that prevents us from asking further questions; otherwise there would be no end to the chain of *whys*. Why must there always be a *why*? Who asks the questions? Who asks why? Here's the doubting offspring of our intellect.

As long as we can question, we remain within the intellectual dimension, and not in the care of Mystery. Only when we stop asking can we attain the "new innocence"—which does not depend on will and thought. This Mystery of piety is tangible, incarnate, present in the Spirit among angels and Men, and received in God's glory (see 1 Tim 3:16)—the entire cosmotheandric reality is therefore present. There are no longer remoteness and distance that could spark questions. The end of questioning is, by antonomasia, Mystery.

This end has four intermediate stages.

The first is the individual stage. Something is incomprehensible to us and we accept it as such. It is a mystery to us, but not in itself. Our life is full of mysteries that we slowly, and at least partly, solve: the Un-understood (*das Unverstandene*). To us this remains a secret. Luther translated the Greek word *mysterion* as *Geheimnis* (secret)—perhaps partly to avoid the Latin translation *sacramentum*, which could be easily misunderstood. Today, for similar reasons, there is a tendency to go back to the word *Mysterium*.

The second is the human stage. The intellect recognizes that, at this point, there are actual limits to further questioning. We are aware that without any access to a fact it is impossible to know it. We do not usually know the secret thoughts of our neighbor; they are a mystery to us, but not in themselves. We are not denied access—our friend may in fact share with us his thoughts and feelings. It is not really a mystery, therefore, but merely something Unknown (*Unbekanntes*). We can understand what our neighbor reveals, even though the very contents may sound unclear to us.

Strictly speaking, Mystery emerges only in the third stage, when, on principle, we do not have access to the source of information. A classic example is the monotheistic interpretation of the Christian Trinity. We are not allowed access to it. And yet we would never even have come to know it if God had not revealed it to us, since this revealed reality (unlike the hidden thoughts of our friend) belongs to the nature of a Being who transcends us infinitely. To us this is a mystery that we cannot solve by ourselves. It is something that overcomes the power of our intellect, yet respects its "rights," since, otherwise, it could not be revealed to Man. If the doctrine of the Trinity violated the principle of contradiction, we would not be able to grant this Mystery any claim to truth. For example, Thomas Aquinas defined this principle as "*sacrosanctum*," valid even to God himself (and from here to Hegel is but a short step). This is the Mystery that lies within a monotheistic worldview. The strictly monotheistic

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[1] [Editor's note]: Cf. St. Paul's 1 Tim 3:16.

God is "omniscient"; He reveals the mystery to whom He chooses, even to the "simple" who have no rational understanding of it (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21). This is the common conception of Mystery: Man does not know, but God does (2 Cor 12:2–3). It is the "hidden," "secret" Mystery that has remained unuttered since the beginning of time (Col 1:26; Rom 16:26), the Unexpected (*das Unerwartbare*). Yet neither is this the last stage.

The Scriptures speak, finally, of a "Mystery of faith" (1 Tim 3:9) that must be kept, with a "clear conscience," in a pure heart (1 Tim 1:5). This is a mystery not only of reason but of faith—that is what is difficult for Western culture to stand. At this point in time, in this millennium, the contribution of other cultures and religions appears to be a promising challenge not only to Christianity but also to other traditions. The Christian tradition is by no means the closed transmission of a frozen doctrine, and can afford to be enriched by other influences without losing its own continuity. The divine Mystery is a radical novelty (cf. 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:5, etc.). While the Christian Scriptures often refer to the Mystery in its third sense, limiting it to the "third stop," they do also leave the door open to the "last stop," where no one can get off. The key here is once again the Trinity. In dealing with these "three Persons," not only must their *identity* be stated, but also an infinite *difference*—although these concepts cannot be referred to the divine Mystery without somehow forcing them.

To understand this better, we may recall that the reception of the Christian message during the first two Christian millennia (especially when it was received and interpreted in the Greek-Roman world) was overshadowed by that genius of southern Italy named Parmenides. Parmenides is responsible for imparting the forms of philosophical thought in Europe that are still applied today: Being is, Non-Being is not, since Being is thinkable and Non-Being is unthinkable, as "what can be *thought* and what can *be* is the same thing." Consequently God, qua Being, is identical to His own thought. He is, in himself, absolutely thinkable because He is the absolute Being; He is inconceivable only to us. It is not by chance that, according to Parmenides, Non-Being is not, Nothingness is not. The West has been conditioned by this tacit presupposition, but it is no longer sufficient. Today, therefore, the challenge consists in building a new column, which, without damaging the archway of the past twenty-six centuries, may enable the creation of new vaults, capable of both manifesting and supporting the rainbow of religious peace.

A large part of Asian cultures and religions, in fact, recognizes the Void (which is not to be identified with nothingness, much less with nihilism) as primary and gives it a fundamental role. In short, Mystery is Reality itself—beyond Being. God is a mystery to Himself.

The moment we "conceive" the *inconceivability* of God we are able to grasp not only our own (human) limits but also His "unlimited" nature, that is, His *own* inconceivability—not merely *our* inability to comprehend Him. God is not a concept, and consequently, He is inconceivable.

In this sense, a hypothetically conceptual self-consciousness of Divinity would only conceive that which can be conceived (by It) and not necessarily Its whole essence—that which mystical traditions designate as Over-Essence, Over-Being, Over-Oneness, or suchlike.

Omniscience (*omniscientia*) does not exhaust its own reality, because God is not mere intellect. He "is" not only *Logos*. He "is" also Father and Spirit. The omniscience of God knows all that there is to know, that is, all the knowable. But—against Parmenides—all the knowable does not necessarily comprehend the whole of Reality. Mysticism has always perceived this. "Blessed are those who have attained infinite ignorance," wrote Evagrius Ponticus. *Brahman* does not even know to be *brahman*; Īśvara *does*, as the Vedantic teachings tell us. Also according to the Catholic faith, God manifests himself as infinitely inconceivable even in His immediate vision (*visio beatifica*).

In summing up, we may pick up what we said at the beginning; that is, that there is one single divine mystery: *Christ* (Col 2:2; cf. 1:26; Eph 3:4, etc.), the *logos* incarnate (Jn 1:14)—which presupposes the Trinity and which consequently performs our *theôsis* (divinization). This is the Christian mystery par excellence: the link, the bond (*religio*) between God and Man, also including the world; the bond between the finite and the Infinite. We cannot conceive, grasp God, but we can be grasped by Him. This grasping transcends all the known and the knowable; it is literally "un-embraceable." The awareness of this is the *docta ignorantia* (learned ignorance), as Nicholas of Cusa explains: a special type of *epignosis*. It is the true poverty of the spirit (cf. Mt 5:3).

SECTION II

HERMENEUTICS

Is qui invenerit interpretationem (hermeneia)
horum verborum non gustabit mortem.

He who discovers the interpretation
Of these words will not taste death.

Evangelium Thomae, 1[1]

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[1] Cf.: "But whoever hears the teachings will be able to stop the flow of birth and death and will never be parted from supreme Great Bliss" (Long-ch'en Rab-jam-pa [1308–1363], *Dharma-catur-ratna-mala*, 1).

1

METATHEOLOGY AS
FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

αλλα ο λογοσ του θρου
ου δεδεται

Sed verbum Dei non est alligatum.

Theo-logy is not in bondage.

2 Tim 2:9†

A Parable

A teacher who was a Westerner or trained along Western lines was almost in despair: After a carefully built-up scientific explanation of malaria, its processes, causes, and so on, the boys in a Ugandan primary school did not seem to have understood anything. "Why does a man catch malaria?" one boy asked timidly. "Because a mosquito, the carrier of the parasite, bites him," replied the teacher, who went on to give the whole explanation again. At this the class, still unconvinced and solidly behind the daring boy, shouted, "But who sent the mosquito to bite the man?"

For those Ugandan boys, the schoolmaster had neither understood nor explained anything. They were not concerned with facts, scientific "hows," or efficient causes, but with the living world (and perhaps the final cause), the existentially relevant issue—for the real issue here (imagine you or one of your family with malaria) is why that particular individual has been bitten by that particular mosquito. Fundamental theology is like that teacher, and two-thirds or perhaps even three-fourths of our present generation resemble the schoolboys. Theoretical explanations about malaria or religion are all very well, but unless I can explain why the mosquito has bitten me. . . .

The Two Meanings of Fundamental Theology

As commonly understood, fundamental theology is a pre-theological or philosophical reflection on the foundations of theology. Its reflections are directed either to justify the assertions of Christian doctrine—a discipline traditionally called *apologetics*—or to find

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† "But the word of God is not shut up" (NEB) or "but the word of God is not bound" (AV; RV) and the like are the contextually obvious correct translations.

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out the sources and foundations of theology. The former purports to be a rational or at least reasonable justification of the elements elaborated by theology; the latter claims to disclose the very basis of theological self-understanding. I shall discuss only the second meaning.

Assumptions and Presuppositions

Two distinct groups, *assumptions* and *presuppositions*, underlie fundamental theology. Among the *assumptions*, we have first the notion that theology needs a foundation that is in some way outside it, and, second, that this basis can be known.

Both of these assumptions are to be found at the very start of fundamental theology; they were present even before the discipline received its current shape. But as soon as the discipline acquired consistency—that is, as soon as Christian theologians felt the need for a foundation for theology *outside*—they by and large assumed that this was the right way to proceed. One of the most striking examples of this kind of thinking is the First Vatican Council, so many of whose pronouncements tend in the direction of just such a fundamental theology.

A dualistic conception of reality is proper to this type of thinking; God and the world, uncreated and created, Being and the beings, the ground and the structure built upon it. In this two-story construction of nature and supernature, grace is built on nature, faith on reason, theology on philosophy, and so on. Their relation of dependence is neither an exigency from below nor a lack of freedom from above. Rather, the second level presupposes the first, and the first is not de facto complete without the second. To be sure, the lower levels are called *preambula* not *fundamenta*, so as to maintain the freedom and "gratuity" of the upper story. But it amounts to the same thing. If, for instance, you do not admit there is a God and a soul, how can Christian teaching make sense to you?

Among the *presuppositions*, one is that these foundations that sustain theology are universally valid. Since they allegedly serve all human beings without distinction, if somebody cannot grasp them, this supposedly means that he has not yet reached the level of mental development that would enable him to understand these basic "truths." Consequently, a certain degree of "civilization" was believed necessary before one could understand and then adhere to the message of the Church: Methods like the so-called pre-catechetical instruction or *évangélisation de base*—a certain philosophical indoctrination on the concepts of "person," "nature," "substance," "individual," "private property"; the preaching of monogamy, or the effort to convince people to prefer other manners of eating and dress, and so on—were all considered tools of the Christian *kerygma*, necessary preconditions for proclaiming the gospel.

The Crisis of the Presuppositions

The distinction between presuppositions and assumptions seems to me of capital importance. An *assumption* is something I may assume for many possible reasons: traditional, heuristic, axiomatic, pragmatic, hypothetical, and so on. It is a principle I set at the base of my thinking process in a more or less explicit way. A *presupposition*, on the other hand, is something I uncritically and unreflectively take for granted. It belongs to the myth in which I live and out of which I draw raw material to feed my thinking. The moment a presupposition is known as the basis of thought or the starting point of an intellectual process, it ceases to be a presupposition. Now only another person—or myself in a second reflexive moment—can make me aware of my presuppositions; when that happens I cannot just hold them as I had earlier. I either reject them or keep them as "suppositions," assumptions. This is also why

the moment theology becomes aware of its presuppositions—either by criticism from the outside or by a critical perspective from within—theologians begin to question the hitherto unquestioned basis of their science. The crisis thus produced is of the sort that any living consciousness must pass through in order to grow.

Now both theology and fundamental theology were at home in one particular culture and worldview; they took for granted the presuppositions of the Western world. The two sciences were grounded in the same myth and shared many presuppositions, some of which have recently been laid bare and now provoke theological confusion in an era of global encounter among religions.

Indeed, these uncovered presuppositions have even been questioned as assumptions. The current generation finds the traditional scheme insufficient. In fact, the ground on which theology rests has become more problematic than the Christian content itself.

The Challenge of Universality

The real challenge of Christian faith today comes from within, that is, from an inner dynamic toward universality, from its own claim to "catholicity." And now that the horizon of universality has outgrown the boundaries of Western civilization and its colonies, what was once considered "catholic" becomes "provincial." Today any message directed to the whole of mankind that takes a part for the whole or ignores the variety of peoples, cultures, and religions is bound to be suspicious from the outset. Christian faith has either to accept this challenge or declare its allegiance to a single culture and thereby renounce its claim to possess a universally acceptable message.

This problem facing fundamental theology cannot be solved by merely extrapolating, without previously justifying, a set of propositions that may be meaningful within a certain religious or cultural context, but irrelevant, meaningless, or even unacceptable outside it. If fundamental theology is to have any relevance in our time of worldwide communication, it has to address itself to a radical cross-cultural problematic. It has to strive at formulating propositions intelligible to people outside Western culture (just as also for those in the West who no longer think, imagine, or act according to the paradigms that still guide traditional fundamental theology). A simple glance at history will convince us that the differences between cultures are not minor. A principle we consider incontrovertible may be dubious in another culture. For the most part, people today are no longer prone to mistakenly imagine that everybody thinks and feels alike simply because they outwardly behave similarly. The encounter of peoples, cultures, and religions is a major problem for fundamental theology, a challenge to its very anthropological and philosophical foundations. In this connection I would like to offer some general considerations.

Foundations: A Priori and a Posteriori

The basic need for more universal foundations for Christian theology cannot be ignored or explained away by assuming that the "other" will sooner or later understand or be converted to "our" point of view. Those days are gone. The problem is to seek foundations for Christian theology that at least make sense to peoples outside the fundamental theology's traditional milieu.

The only possible method for finding the foundations of theology must be a posteriori. That is, fundamental theology is not at the beginning of theological reflection (a priori) but at its end. Christian faith is not based on certain foundations that fundamental theology lays

bare (discloses). Rather the effort to understand the Christian fact leads us to discover some conditions of its intelligibility in given circumstances. Let us recall here that the primordial meaning of "catholicity" is not geographical universality, but internal completion.

Here history is also a wise master. Not too long ago all sorts of ideas were considered fundamental to Christian theology, notions that today are dismissed as accidental or nonessential, because other interpretations—perhaps more plausible—have been found. These interpretations claim to save the real message precisely by purifying it of obsolete worldviews.

The real difficulty is to find the criterion for this operation.

How am I to know whether something is essential to my faith or not? Where will the process end once I begin to de-mythicize?

The Unity between Theology and Fundamental Theology

The thesis I am proposing tries to reestablish the unity—and so the harmony—between theology and fundamental theology. It asserts that fundamental theology is neither a necessary epistemological condition for nor the ontological basis of theology. Were theology to depend for its acceptability on an extra-theological base, it would lose not only its character of wisdom but also its intellectual cogency. Theology would be utterly at the mercy of whatever philosophy offered the better backing; it would depend wholly on an auction in the philosophical (or even the public) marketplace.

What I propose is the recovery of fundamental theology as a fundamentally theological endeavor, that is, as being fundamentally theology. Reincorporating fundamental theology into theology as a whole will by this very process explode the only too narrow cage in which theology has sometimes been confined. It will liberate theology from the tutelage of philosophy so that theology will no longer depend on a foundation (one particular philosophy, worldview, or whatever) outside itself.

Accordingly, fundamental theology would be that theological activity (for which there is so often no room in certain theologies) that critically examines its assumptions and is always ready to question its presuppositions. But it does this not from a separate platform independent from faith and on which "theology" would subsequently build up its "own" system. Rather, fundamental theology is the effort to understand the actual theological situation in any given context. There is a difference, indeed, between the content of the Christian belief and the conditions of its intelligibility; but there is not a separation, since the content of faith is nothing but an intelligible crystallization of faith itself. Content means intelligible content, and it cannot be intelligible if it rests on premises that are explicitly not understood.

I am saying that the anthropological conditions necessary to understand and accept the Christian message cannot and so must not be severed from the interpretation of its content. Let me elaborate this point by means of an example.

One Example: The Buddhist, the Hindū, and the Secularist

The existence of God has traditionally been considered a philosophical truth independent of any theology; hence it was supposed to be one of the foundations of Christian doctrine. The resurrection of Christ, on the other hand, belongs to the purely theological order. It is usually said that if you do not accept the existence of God you cannot understand what the Christian faith is about; it is also generally affirmed that if you do not accept the resurrection of Christ you cannot be called a Christian. The difference between these statements is that while you do not need a specifically Christian belief to admit the existence of God, you do

need it to accept the resurrection of Christ. The affirmation "Christ is risen," then, can be taken as one of the shortest and most accurate expressions of this Christian belief.

The situation today is more complex. Let us abruptly confront this example with a triple fact: a Buddhist who does not believe in any God whatsoever and yet has a highly developed and refined religion, a Hindū who does not object at all to the resurrection of Christ, and a secularist theologian or a modern Westerner who calls himself a Christian and yet accepts neither God nor the resurrection as traditionally understood.

The Buddhist would like to believe the message of Christ and sincerely thinks he could accept and even understand it better if it were purified from what he considers its theistic superstructure. The Hindū would wonder why he must join a physical and cultural community only because he is ready to believe in the divinity and resurrection of Christ. The "death of God" theologian, or whatever name we may choose for him, would say that precisely because Christ is the Savior, he can dispense with any conception of a transcendent God and the miracle of a physical resurrection.

Whether or not these three people can be called Christian will depend on the inter-pretation of what they say, that is, on what they really *mean* to say. I shall not enter here into the merits of these arguments. But I will say that the three statements present the same pattern, and it would be artificial and confusing to lodge the first in fundamental theology, the second in theology, and the third in philosophy. Everything depends on what we understand by God and how we picture Christ's resurrection—on our assumptions, our context, and our understanding of how the Christian belief can be maintained within such religious, epistemological, and metaphysical patterns. Is it, for example, necessary to have a theistic and substantivized conception of the divinity to be loyal to Christian faith? Does one need a literal and fundamentalist image of the resurrection to be an orthodox believer? Is it essential to hold the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical schema in order to accept the Christian message? Must I really admit some *preambula fidei* as part of faith itself, or does it depend on how I interpret what my faith tells me, so that faith may have different *preambula*?

The existential Catholic answer to the individual is very clear: your interpretation, your understanding of the Christian fact, must be personally intelligible, but it must also harmo-nize with tradition—hence with the *magisterium*—because dogma is also a historical reality and has a communal character.

We are not, however, dealing with the problem of discipline or with a specific case. My question would be whether, or on what grounds, tradition and the *magisterium* have the right to prevent the entry into the Church of people whose lives are guided by different patterns of intelligibility. Or again, is the present historical crystallization of the Christian faith the only possible one? Theoretically the Church has never said this, but the difficulty lies in discov-ering whether and which formulations are equivalent. So the problem remains: Can several patterns sustain and convey the Christian *kerygma*? To what extent can they do so? Here only history will have the last word, for the Church itself is inscribed in the historical process.

The Function of Fundamental Theology

If we are aware of the problem we are already on the way to overcoming it. The extraor-dinary fact is that this awareness is only now dawning on the great majority of Christian theologians. I mean this not as an accusation but as a statement of fact. Given the historical development of Christian theology, it could not be otherwise. To pour today's wine into old wineskins is reprehensible, but it was not when they were brand-new.

The role of fundamental theology is therefore to make theological affirmations also intelligible outside the culture and even the religion where they had until then grown and prospered. I would say that if fundamental theology is to fulfill its role, it must not only clarify its own tradition, but paradoxically leave kith and kin to wander into terra incognito—an unknown promised land. And herein lies the immense difficulty. Fundamental theology is an exodus theology. Thus it is not only a question of courage but also of feasibility. Is it possible to take root in an alien, or even a nonexistent, soil? Can we jump over our own shadow? Can fundamental theology make theological statements intelligible outside their proper context?

We must take the differences between people, cultures, and religions very seriously. Two-thirds of the world's population today does not live in the myth of history; half the people on this earth (believers and nonbelievers) do not share the Abrahamic conception of God; one-third of mankind is unconscious of separated individuality. These are only some of the many major differences we could name. Fundamental theology cannot ignore such questions, and its function may well be to justify a theological as well as a religious pluralism. Fundamental theology is concerned with finding a common language through which to express theological insights, while being well aware that language is more than just a tool—that it is, rather, the first expression of these very insights.

Metatheology

Fundamental theology then becomes a kind of *diacritical theology* in the sense that *diacrisis* was understood in Plato's *Sophist* or *viveka* in Saṅkara's *Vedānta*. I feel, however, that the simple term *metatheology* is more apposite, for it suggests a total human attitude that, on the one hand, transcends merely intellectual elaborations of the message of different religions (theologies) and, on the other, goes beyond the *theos* as the subject matter of these theologies and the *logos* as the instrument for dealing with it. I am not arguing against this conception of the *theos* or this use of the *logos*. I am only pleading that the *theos* not be taken for granted nor the *logos* divinized. Metatheology could also be described as the religious endeavor to understand that primordial human relatedness we perceive in dealing with ultimate problems. This is not derived from a particular concept of human nature, but is the fruit of pluri-theological investigation. I am not assuming a kind of objectifiable common ground or certain universally formulable statements held in common. I am only asking for truly open dialogue. The meeting ground itself may have to be created, but a brighter stream of light, service, and understanding will emerge in the intermingling of religious currents, ideas, and beliefs. I only foresee (and in a way prophesy) an earnest religious struggle, an authentic human commerce and intercourse at the deepest level of humanity, the fruit of love, not lust or ambition, pregnant with the good news of a new creature. Surely the Christian should not fear to be born again, nor for that matter should the adherent of any other religion. Nor should any faith shun the genuine search for truth. Confidence in truth is already a fundamental religious category.

Understanding the Christian *Kerygma*

Two important ideas follow from what has been said so far.

The first is the need for a radical change in the orientation of fundamental theology itself; in other words, its conversion, its *metanoia*. From within a Christian perspective I would put it in a way practically opposite to the customary one, although in this divergent formulation I am most traditional, for tradition is often paradoxical and has even taken this

turn several times before today. I would say, then, that the role of fundamental theology is not to find some extra-theological principles on which to base theological speculation, but to search for the intelligibility of the Christian fact in any authentic human attitude and genuine philosophical position—to examine how far the Christian *kerygma* is tied to a particular religious tradition. It would explain, for instance, not that accepting the existence of God is a necessary prerequisite for understanding and accepting the Christian belief, but that the Christian proclamation could perhaps find justification and meaning also under the hypothesis that there is no God. These last two words mean to suggest the possibility that if there is (or were) a truly atheistic society, the Christian *kerygma* should not first need to clear the ground by proving the existence of God and only then proceed further, but that it could find a meaningful *kerygma* by transmythicizing the God-talk. I am not saying that this effort should always succeed, but that it should always be tried—for its very failure may bear fruit.

Metatheology is not just another system of theology any more than metaphysics is simply a more refined physical science. A theological system may be theistic; metatheology need not be. Metatheology may, for instance, be at the origin of a nontheistic "theological" reflection; it does not encroach upon the different systems or jeopardize the theological schools of the most disparate systems and religions. And yet it belongs to all theological investigation. In fact, as a result of its activity, metatheology modifies both the underlying system and the Christian self-understanding (albeit not according to any preconceived pattern).

I may clarify this idea from a double perspective. From the speculative angle I could say that fundamental theology tries to understand the fundamental theological issue (for the Christian Christ) in a *given* philosophical, religious, and cultural situation. From a pastoral and Christian angle I would add that it tries to do and say in another context what Jesus Christ did and said in the place and time in which he lived.

The Ecclesial and Dialogical Character of Fundamental Theology

The second idea has already announced itself. It is the communitarian or ecclesial character of this enterprise. This cannot be the work of Christians alone or of "religious" people exclusively, but must result from the common effort of all those interested enough (or "condemned," as Fichte would have put it, although I prefer "called upon") to perform this major work of dialogue, communication, and communion, in spite of and even through the conflicts that may arise.

Here is where theology and religion meet; where life and speculation encounter each other; where the wiser the scholar, the simpler he is as a Man. Neither side or party can unilaterally lay down the rules of the game, or fix the conditions or the outcome of the experience. Fundamental theology becomes lived religion, a mystical faith prior to or beyond any formulation. It is the religious quest for a ground of understanding, for a common concern still to be lived, delimited, verbalized.

What I am aiming at is this: Dialogue is not simply a device for discussing or clarifying different opinions, but is itself a religious category. Dialogue becomes a religious act, an act of faith (which comes from hearing), a mutual recognition of our human condition and its constitutive relativity.

If the aim of fundamental theology is to elaborate the assumptions on which a theology may be based, it requires dialogue on an equal footing, the collaboration and positive contribution of the "others." Only they can help me discover my presuppositions and the underlying principles of my science. In brief, *das Ungedachte*, the unthought, can be disclosed only by

one who does not "think" like me and who helps me discover the unthought magma out of which my thinking crystallizes. For my part, I can do him the same service.

This procedure throws us all into the arms of one another.

The amount of risk and good faith required is patent. It is truly a religious act, full of faith, hope, and love. But it also fulfills a methodological need. If I must dig out a foundation on which the other can also stand, I need his help so that he may at least be able to tell me if the ground I find is also a ground for him.

I need his interpretation of myself and my theology in order to understand myself and my theology; he needs the same from me. Fundamental theology is not an esoteric science or a discipline *ad usum delphini*; it is the forum of a worldwide *ecclesia*, of all people for whom care for the other is as sacred as a concern for one's own household. I shall never be able to love my neighbor as myself if I do not know him as my *self*. This sentence obviously goes both ways. The place *in between*, where we meet, is the basis for fundamental theology and also the ground for human encounter. The kingdom of God is *between* us.

THE SUBJECT OF INFALLIBILITY

Solipsism and Verification

και ο λογοσ . . . εσκηνωσεν εν ημιν
Et Verbum . . . habitavit in nobis.
And the Word . . . dwelt among us

Jn 1:14

Thesis

The thesis of this chapter is the following: *The notion of infallibility is coherent only within a closed system*; in other words: *The rational affirmation of infallibility leads to solipsism*; or simply: *Infallibility is incommunicable.* This amounts to saying that *infallibility is unverifiable*, that *infallibility has no other basis than its own self-affirmation.* Or, again: *Infallibility belongs to the order of myth.* The moment it enters the realm of the *logos* and is formulated in a logical statement, it cannot have any verification that does not already assume an equal degree of infallibility. The reason that somebody is infallible has to be equally infallible if his infallibility is to have any meaning. The upshot of our thesis is plain: In the sublunary world, *humanity is the ultimate subject of infallibility.* Once the *logos* has come to "dwell among us," there is no higher instance than our incarnated, earthly *logos.*

The Notion of Infallibility

The notion of infallibility, unlike those of truth and error, implies an element of volition.[1] An infallible statement cannot be reduced to the simple formula "*A* is *B*"; it always implies a third element: "When *p* affirms that *A* is *B*, so it is." If we let *m* = "*A* is *B*," we can express infallibility by the formula "*p* posits *m*." So public judgments, not private truths, are infallible. *P* is not infallible when thinking but when proclaiming, declaring. Infallibility does not mean inerrancy, that is, the absence of error; it means the impossibility of erring, of committing a mistake when making a particular declaration. For this reason infallibility applies first of all to God, who is by definition error.[2]

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[1] In spite of the theological furor over this problem, I have not found a philosophical analysis of the question as suggested in this chapter.

[2] Cf. the concise expression of the First Vatican Council, which speaks of faith *propter auctoritatem ipsius Dei revelantis, qui nec falli nec fallere potest* [By the authority of God himself as revealer, who can neither deceive nor be deceived] (Denz.-Schön. 3008).

The very etymology of the word[3] suggests this moral character of not erring, deceiving, betraying, or failing.[4] Strictly speaking, a proposition can be infallible only in relation to a subject who affirms or receives it. Infallibility expresses a relation between the one who affirms some judgment as infallible and the one who receives it as such. Thus even as a charism, in the most traditional sense, infallibility is not bestowed for the private profit of the beneficiary, but is for "edification," for the benefit of others. A proposition can be said to be infallible only if it has been endowed with the property of infallibility by the peculiar act of the infallible declaration of the proposition declaring it such. Furthermore, infallibility does not belong only to the pure intellect or to reason alone. Infallibility implies that a person does not err in the *act* that is considered infallible. Infallibility then is a character proper to action, and is not only a logical feature of a proposition—whence the remark, or rather the hermeneutical advice, that in order to understand the affirmations of Vatican I on infallibility we must bear in mind that the Council's perspective was that of a court of law issuing specific decrees, not an academy spinning theories.[5] Infallibility does not belong to the realm of mere speculation. It is practical; it belongs to the realm of orthopraxis, as we shall see.

In other words, we cannot separate the subject who pronounces the infallible judgment from the concept of infallibility itself. When someone says that the "canons" defined as dogmas by the Church are infallible, this means that the authority that has defined them as infallible has not erred, and that anyone who adheres to them is not mistaken.[6] Otherwise, that is, if the infallible pronouncement were only a statement of fact and not a judgment, then it would suffice to say that the dogmas are true. In this case, reason or common sense—not the defining authority—would compel the listener's adherence to those pronouncements.

An infallible judgment can be both an active and a passive act, but it must at least be passive. For instance, the statement *p* affirms *m* expresses the act whereby I take *p* to be infallible when it affirms *m*, so that I accept *m* because *p* affirms it. Without this trust in *p* there would be no infallibility. Those who have personally experienced or have studied certain types of charismatic movements will readily substantiate this with innumerable cases in which the saint, the leader, the guru, or the like is taken to be infallible without his having made this claim at all. The others make him infallible. *Magister dixit.*

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[3] *Fallo* (*fallere*) means to err, also in the sense of deceiving someone, breaking a promise, betraying one's word, etc. Cf. *sphallo*, which, in addition, means falling (and this also in the figurative sense of falling into disgrace, having difficulties, having an accident).

[4] For this reason Hans Küng suggests the word be rendered by *Untrüglichkeit* (indefectibility) rather than by *Unfehlbarkeit* (infallibility) (*Die Kirche* [Freiburg: Herder, 1967], 406; English translation: *The Church* [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967], 342–43). Cf. the more detailed discussion in the same author's *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage* (Zürich: Benziger, 1970), 147ff.; English translation: *Infallible? An Enquiry* [London: Collins, 1971], 149ff.). Cf. as a curiosum Pascal writing in a letter of November 5, 1656, to Mlle de Roannez: "le ne puis m'empêcher de vous dire que je voudrais être infaillible dans mes jugements" [I cannot help but tell you that I would like to be infallible in my judgments] (*Oeuvres complètes*, ed. I. Chevalier [Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1954], 511).

[5] "It was no accident that in the Vatican Council of 1870 and in the Roman Catholic Church outside that imposing assembly the conflict resolves itself into a bitter opposition between the scholarly and the administrative genius of the Church, the former as hostile to the definition of papal infallibility as the latter was urgent in its favour. The Curia is a court, not an academy. Its utterances are decrees, not theories. Its language is not theological so much as legal, and is to be interpreted and judged as such" (W. A. Curtis, "Infallibility," *ERE* 7.257).

[6] Cf. M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, vol. 3: *Die Lehre von der Kirche* (München: Hueber, 1958), esp. 177, 793ff.

Passive infallibility is the ultimate one, for even when p claims infallibility, it does not mean that it is p that makes m to be the case, but that p sees and discovers m—that is, "A is B" where others perhaps can or could not see it. Infallibility does not make truth, but proclaims it. When Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption, for example, he claimed infallibility not because he thought he individually could not be mistaken, but because he believed he was interpreting the faith of the Church infallibly, that is, without the possibility of erring. In the final analysis, papal infallibility is also passive, for the pope is considered to be only the vessel of that infallibility that Christ promised his Church. So, too, when a Christian affirms that Mary was assumed into heaven body and soul, he is convinced that he cannot err, because he is simply confirming this very infallibility given by Christ. When a believer affirms that Man is composed of body and soul, however, he admits that he could be mistaken. The first affirmation would be infallible, the second would not. The first rests on an external infallible authority (the pope or the Church), while the second rests on a personal judgment that could perhaps change since it cannot refer to such an external court of appeal.

The Sociological and the Psychological Context

We shall take as an example the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. To affirm infallibility in this case implies that the pope's *act* is infallible, that is, that the pope did not err in making this solemn declaration.[7] That he did not err means he proclaimed an objective—that is, public—truth, not just a subjective or private truth. He did not necessarily express his intimate conviction, but he proclaimed that something has to be believed as truly belonging to the deposit of revelation. Proceeding with Scholastic casuistry we could very well assume that the pope does not personally believe in what he proclaims, and nevertheless he would remain infallible as Vatican I understood him to be.

The distinctive character of any infallible declaration lies in its claim to add an *extrinsic criterion* of truth to the affirmation "A is B." In the case of the Roman Church, infallibility does not even purport to state new "truths," but only declares that a certain "truth" is (or was) contained in the deposit of revelation.

This extrinsic criterion—something not inherent in the proposition itself—must be understood first of all in function of its particular sociological and psychological contexts within a historical period. Let us explain. To explicitly declare a judgment infallible represents a first step in the process of de-mythicization. Prior to this pronouncement, the surrounding myth vouched for the truth of that judgment. It is only when the myth begins to break down that you feel the need to be reassured by some external authority. You demand this reinforcement of your belief because you have seen *in obliquo* the necessity of grounding it in something other than the proposition itself. You feel the need to declare infallible only those formulas or judgments that you fear could be "fallible." We are here clearly dealing with convictions, and so we are on sociological and psychological terrain. Reason was proclaimed

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infallible in eighteenth-century Europe by virtue of the same process by which the pope was declared infallible a century later.

A sociological law could be formulated here: The importance of and the need for an infallible pronouncement increases in inverse proportion to the conviction that supports that pronouncement, or, the other way round, in inverse proportion to the belief in the truth of the proposition. If I can depend on a p that affirms infallibly that Man has landed on the moon (and so, for example, be rid of the doubt that it might all have been a trick concocted by the mass media to enable the United States to dominate world politics), this reassures me more than if p infallibly affirms that $2 + 2 = 4$, a proposition that does not stand in need of being reinforced by an infallible authority. And if someone tells me infallibly that there is a possible hell for Man, this disturbs me much more than the infallible affirmation that there is also death lurking on my horizon. For the person who has doubts about the moral value of liberalism (or communism), an infallible declaration that reaffirms its morality is more desirable than, for instance, an infallible statement condemning slavery, which is seen today without any doubt as a condemnable institution.

If the proposition "A is B" is considered self-evident, an infallible declaration of its truth would be superfluous since infallibility adds nothing to the proposition as such. The proposition is not *made* true by the infallible declaration, but only recognized as true and thus (infallibly) proclaimed as such. At the other extreme, if the proposition "A is B" is considered contradictory, an infallible declaration of its truth would not be able to change my conviction either, since infallibility does not add anything to the truth of the proposition. These two extreme cases do not contradict our sociological law, for in both cases, evidence 1 or evidence 0 would satisfy our formulation. The need for and importance of the infallible declaration in one case equals my conviction (1) and in the other becomes meaningless (0) when my conviction is nil. Between these extremes lies the whole gamut of real situations. It might be interesting for a sociology of religion to note that the tendency to desire the certitude of infallibility stems from a crisis of conviction (or of belief, a theologian might say). As long as you do not feel the need for epistemological *certainty*, you do not ask for infallible declarations. There is an obvious link between the post-Cartesian attitude that requires the security of rational knowledge and the felt need for infallibility—a need that culminated in the First Vatican Council.[8] In a pre-Cartesian world, the infallibility proclaimed by the Council would scarcely make sense. Thus the Orthodox Church, which has not suffered the Cartesian impact, does not feel the need to declare its dogmas infallible because the need for an additional certainty is not felt.

Now in order for the infallible affirmation to reinforce my conviction, I must obviously accept it as infallible. It is all the more desired if the affirmation helps to convince.[9] A psychology

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[8] "It is clear that not infallibility but ordinary certainty is the basis of our faith, at least as far as the necessary knowledge of the fact of revelation and most of all its essential parts is concerned. We have mistaken the need for certainty for the need of infallibility. Actually we are certain without it, and infallibility itself is less certain than the fact and major components of the revelation." Thus affirms the Catholic Bishop F. Simons in explaining the post-Cartesian mentality in his book *Infallibility and the Evidence* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1968), 65. He seeks to go beyond the dogma of the Roman Church not by enlarging the interpretation of infallibility but by humbly and sincerely recognizing that there is no such dogma, and consequently true Catholic orthodoxy has nothing to do with it. Given the Indian context from which he writes and the unspoiled or naive faith of the bishop, our sociological law is reinforced: He does not need "infallibility" for his Christians of Indore (it sounds superfluous and redundant), but Rome does.

[9] The formula of Augustinian origin (cf. PL 38.734), *Roma locuta causa finite* [Rome has spoken,

of religion will say here that I will all the more readily accept the infallibility of "*A* is *B*" if I am already inclined to accept that *A* is *B*. In this case, the relation is a direct proportion: The more I believe *A* is *B*, the more easily I will accept "*A* is *B*" as an infallible statement. This is just the opposite of the sociological relation proposed above: the more a social consciousness is convinced that *A* is *B*, the less it feels the need for an infallible statement to that effect, whereas the less I am convinced that *A* is *B*, the more I need the certitude of infallibility.

Combining the sociological and the psychological aspects, we could say that the need for infallible pronouncements increases the stronger the desire to believe (in "*A* is *B*") and the weaker the internal coherence of that in which one believes (in the "*B*" which is "*A*"). From the perspective of the history of religions, it would be worthwhile to examine how different forms of infallibility have emerged the very moment a crisis existed in those structures that had until then expressed a reliable order of truth.

All this explains why infallibility presents a particular ambivalence, which makes this theme extremely delicate to handle, even today. On the one hand, infallibility seems to save the beliefs of the majority from collapse; this leads many to emphasize the value of authority, of definitions, of precise and concrete directives, and so on. More than one historian would tell us that, without the rock of infallibility, much of Christianity would have long since been engulfed by superficial innovations and extremist reactions. On the other hand, infallibility seems to impede and even prohibit any effort at understanding positions that are not majoritarian; it seems to cripple the impetus of progress and evolution, freezing the gamut of interpretations and also undermining the foundations of true spirituality, since the religious edifice does not rest on arguments that affirm authority, but on free conviction and personal experience. So we can well understand the anguished appeals of conscientious people when faced with the danger of stagnation that every form of infallibility carries with it, and the fear of sheer anarchy when we are left without limits of interpretation. For this reason, it seems that some philosophical clarification will be useful and even important.

It is in this context that we should recall what has been said concerning myth and transmythicization. When, perhaps because formulated in obsolete concepts, the belief in particular dogmas seems to cease being mythical and thus it asks for reasons, then a new myth of infallibility dawns, which will give the requisite additional security to these particular dogmas. Now when infallibility itself is questioned—that is, it ceases to be a mythical belief—then we must jump into another order altogether. And precisely here the vital circle of myth is most conspicuous: the Christian community or the Church is infallible because it continues the life of an infallible Christ on earth and it continues the life of Christ—that is, it remains loyal to Christ's spirit—because it is infallible. Infallibility is the very expression of the Christian myth, but to spell it out weakens the myth. The myth of infallibility is undermined by the *logos* of infallibility. This is what we are going to examine.

Can There Be a Hermeneutics of Infallibility?

"*P* posits *m*" is an infallible act when *p* cannot err in affirming *m*. If *p* does not err in affirming *m*, this means that *m* is a true proposition. Now as we have said, infallibility adds nothing to the truth inherent in the proposition "*A* is *B*," but only gives the security, to those who believe in infallibility, that *A* is certainly *B*.

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the case is closed], could give rise to a most interesting psychological analysis. Cf., on the other hand, K. Kerenyi, *Pythia locuta, causa finite*, in "Probleme sur la Pythia," in *L'infaillibilité*, ed. E. Castelli, op. cit., 323–27.

The problem appears as soon as we analyze this *something more* (security, certainty, belief) that belongs to an infallible declaration. I may believe that *p* cannot err when it affirms "*A* is *B*," but what guarantees that I will adhere to *p*'s "*A* is *B*" and not instead to "*A* is *B₁*," (which I cannot distinguish from "*A* is *B*")? The pope has declared that Mary was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and I can affirm this as an infallible judgment. But am I sure my understanding of body and soul is the same as the pope's? Which body? What we call the glorious body? Or rather what the biologist or biochemist studies? Which soul? Or again: Do I have an adequate understanding of heavenly glory? Do I even have the same understanding as the pope?

What can we do? We cannot wait for yet another infallible pronouncement to give the precise meaning of each word, because the process would be interminable. In order to clarify these concepts we would have to use others, *et sic in infinitum*.

In order for this affirmation "*p* posits *m*" to be infallible for me, I must recognize it as infallible. It follows, then, that the act by which I accept the affirmation as infallible must also be infallible. Otherwise, if I could be mistaken when I say that *p* is infallible, its infallibility would be meaningless as far as I am concerned.

We may answer this difficulty by saying that the believer adheres to the infallible proposition as it is defined by the authority proposing it. This is the classical solution. Ecclesiology has long since admitted that (active) infallibility *in docendo*, in teaching, would make no sense were there not (passive) infallibility *in discendo* to receive, to understand, and to effect it.[10] An infallible authority could affirm and proclaim any number of infallible propositions, but they would remain ineffective and dead letter if those who ought to receive and benefit from them did not possess a reciprocal passive infallibility. This notion of passive infallibility is indeed much older and more widespread than the idea of active infallibility.[11] We know, for instance, that the Orthodox Church follows the ancient tradition whereby the *ecclesia discens* must ratify all synodal decisions or declarations. And, while the concept of a single infallible authority is only rarely found in history, the notion of passive infallibility frequently appears. We can think not only of religious examples drawn from a religion, a community, and so on, but also of the contemporary examples of the infallibility of reason, of human conscience, of nature, and even of basic social structures. Even in Christianity, the notions of *sensus ecclesiae*, of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, of council, of mystical body, and of Church itself are closely related to the gift of the Spirit whose continuing presence is necessary in order to discern and then follow the right path, and this points to a passive infallibility.[12]

This leads us to say that no hermeneutic of infallibility is possible, because in order to understand infallibility as it asks to be understood, we must participate in the infallible act itself. Without doubt we can analyze the *concept* of infallibility, but we cannot interpret the infallible act outside the hermeneutic it gives to itself. Contemporary theology has glimpsed this and generally maintains that the subject of infallibility in the Church must be a single one.[13] A dual

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[10] The expression is attributed to Franzelin. Cf. chapter 3 in Y. Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie de laïcat*, Part II (Paris: Cerf, 1953; English translation: *Lay People in the Church* [Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965], chapter 6, 271–323, esp. 289–94), where infallibility is considered as a prophetic function of the Church. Cf. also G. Thils, "L'infaillibilité de l'Eglise 'in credendo' et 'in docendo,'" in *Le premier symposium international de théologie dogmatique fondamentale* (Torino, 1962), 83–122.

[11] Cf. Y. Congar, "Konzil als Versammlung und grundsätzliche Konziliarität der Kirche," in the Karl Rahner Festgabe, *Gott in Welt* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 2:135–65.

[12] Cf. H. Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche, Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Salzburg: Müller, 1964), *passim*, but esp. 473ff.

[13] Cf. K. Rahner, in K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *Episkopat und Primat* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 86ff.; English translation: *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1962), 64ff.;

subject of infallibility would be contradictory and, from every point of view, superfluous.[14]

But the problem is even more subtle. Certainly the pope and the Council are not two independent infallible authorities, but two organs of one and the same authority. We can also say that reason and faith cannot contradict each other because their source of infallibility is the same. This is quite true, and yet the problem remains, not only regarding the de facto conflicts that do arise (between reason and faith or pope and Council, for example), but also regarding their day-to-day coordination or subordination.

To pursue the example of the infallibility *in docendo* of the Church's hierarchy and that *in discendo* of the ecclesial people, let us imagine that the entire Church *magisterium* is unanimous in proclaiming the dogma of the Assumption. In order for this declaration to have its full meaning, the "learning" Church, that is, the ecclesial people, must understand the dogma in the same way as the teaching authority that propounds it. Now if we must postulate a special assistance for the infallible *teaching*, we must do the same for those *taught*. We may agree that understanding is by means of concepts, but then we will also have to recognize that the ecclesial people live on diverse cultural levels and that each context bears a different understanding. The assistance required, then, would have to be more than extraordinary. It would have to be almost personal, a thesis no theologian has ever defended. Moreover, such assistance represents a kind of supernaturalism that would render ecclesiastical infallibility superfluous, since it amounts to affirming that individual conscience is infallible.

It seems we must look for an explanation on a different level.

Here Christian theology could profit from the knowledge and experience of other cultures and religions.[15] In terms of the history of religions, we might say that the passive subject of infallibility adheres to the proposition "*A* is *B*" mythically—that is, not analytically or conceptually, not as a proposition intelligible in or by itself, but as part of a mythic whole. You adhere to "*A* is *B*" by participating in the infallibility of *p*, and without analyzing the content of "*A* is *B*." This is the case when there is no critical distance between the proclaiming authority and the listening people. It amounts to saying that the two "infallibilities" coalesce when the people really believe that the "authority" speaks for them, is their speaker, their true representative, so that the current of communication, in a way, does not descend from the "heights" but ascends from the people upward to its hierarchical symbol. This is obviously not to denigrate the existence of the notion of an infallible authority as myth. History, past and present, shows us the reality and even the vitality of such adherence to myths.[16]

Now myth as myth is incommunicable because it is the very foundation of all communication; it is the horizon you accept without question and that makes possible a certain communion, the condition for any subsequent communication. Myth is never the object of thought (i.e., of the *logos*), nor is it objectifiable; rather myth is what allows thought to conceptualize itself, and faith to express itself. Myth is what enters every thought, every idea, and even every formulation of faith without being identified with any of them, and

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H. Küng, *Strukturen der Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), 335ff.; English translation: *Structures of the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 305ff.; M. Lohrer in J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, *Mysterium Salutis* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1965), 1:577ff.

[14] The theological discussion would center more on the question of whether the subject *primo et per se* were the pope, the Council, or the Church.

[15] Personally I know of no such comparative study devoted to this problematic. I am thinking for example of a cross-cultural theological encounter between this Christian doctrine and the Hindū *mīmāṃsā*. Cf. R. Panikkar, "La demitologizzazione nell'incontro tra Cristianesimo e Induismo," in *Il problema della demitizzatione*, ed. E. Castelli (Padova: Cedam, 1961).

[16] Cf. G. Lanczkowski, "Neuere Forschungen zur Mythologie," *Saeculum* 19, no. 2/3 (1968): 282–309, for the current state of the question.

yet it does not exist separately from them (this sui generis relationship of *mythos* and *logos* is occasionally glimpsed in the process of demythicization—the *logos* is "disengaged" from one myth only to be remythicized, embedded in another myth).[17]

Ultimately this is what traditional theology says when it affirms that the infallible authority only explicates and formulates the faith of the Church in a clear and distinct way. The notion of infallibility thus presents an uncomfortable ambiguity. On the one hand it still upholds the myth. It expresses the fact that the authority articulates and formulates in terms of the *logos* what the people believe. It is not a dictatorial act, not the imposition of a new decree. It is the articulate organ of expression (*logos*) of what the Church believes. On the other hand, it also begins to abolish the myth by making it so explicit that in explaining it, it explains it away. Infallibility wants to make a certain and secure crystallization (in the form of *logos*) of the undifferentiated magma of myth. It wants to "speak" the unspoken. It is important to note that the dynamism here goes from the people to the authority, not vice versa. It is not an individual charisma, but ex officio—and for the public function of that office. This is why infallibility is not inspiration or revelation, but a special assistance bestowed according to a hierarchical order to guide the people of God on their way to the heavenly city. It is not an automatic dynamism, nor is it bestowed "democratically," but it is a work of the divine *Logos*.[18] But does such reasoning not empty infallibility of whatever rational sense it might contain on its own? Is infallibility at all necessary on the level of conceptual explanation? Does infallibility represent just an effort to de-mythicize what cannot be de-mythicized, namely belief?[19] By wanting to affirm infallibility with reason, don't we end up contradicting it? In short, any hermeneutic of infallibility seems to destroy it. Without a hermeneutic, however, we cannot talk about it, we cannot communicate it. You accept infallibility when you accept it in toto along with your faith, without analyzing or interpreting it. Divorced from this holistic attitude of the believer, it makes no sense. The proper functioning of democracy needs the belief in the people's infallibility.

The Internal Logic of Infallibility

In trying to understand infallibility we have until now assumed that we accept it without examining the concept as such. We must now test the value of our hypothesis by analyzing the subject of infallibility in its most elementary philosophical sense.

We have already seen that a proposition per se cannot claim to be infallible; there must always be someone who declares it infallible: either one who affirms "*A* is *B*" or one who accepts this proposition. But who can say "*p* is infallible"?

Here it seems evident that only an affirmation in the first person can have any meaning. If someone says, "You are infallible," this infallibility equally implies the infallibility of the one who affirms it. Likewise for the third person. If someone says "*p* is infallible," it means

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[17] Cf. my chapter "La transmythisation," in *Le mystère du culte dans l'hindouisme et le christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 171ff. Now in Volume VII of this *Opera Omnia*.

[18] In this sense one could understand the decree *Lamentabili* (July 3, 1907) in condemning the proposition: "In definiendis veritatibus ita collaborant discens et docens Ecclesia, ut docenti Ecclesiae nihil commune discentis opinationes sancire" [The "Church learning" and the "Church teaching" collaborate in such a way in defining truths that it only remains for the "Church teaching" to sanction the opinions of the "Church learning"] (Denz.-Schön. 3406). And yet the authority does not proclaim new beliefs.

[19] Cf. the entire volume *Mythe et Foi* (Paris: Aubier, 1966), and especially the Introduction by the editor, E. Castelli, 11ff.

two things: recognizing *p*'s infallibility (if not indeed conferring it), and acknowledging the authority of the speaker who affirms (or confers) that infallibility. For example, if a Council defines the infallibility of the pope, it seems obvious that papal infallibility would then depend on the infallibility of the Council that conferred or acknowledged it.

"You are infallible" or "he is infallible" are not final propositions since they rest on the infallibility of another, namely the speaker who affirms that "you are infallible" or "he is infallible."

We cannot escape this logical exigency by saying that the first person does not confer but only recognizes the infallibility of the second or third person. In our example, the Council would then say that it is not infallible, that it only recognizes a papal infallibility that exists in and of itself, and not by the power or delegation of the Council. So the Council would only explicate what already existed. Another example might be that of a group that recognizes, through whatever external criteria, that the little shepherd is really the king and proclaims him as such. This group has not appointed him king, just as the Council has not given infallibility to the pope; both have merely recognized prerogatives, kingship, or infallibility.

To this we must reply that recognition by another is essential.

The shepherd-king will reign only if he is acknowledged by the people. The pope will be effectively infallible only if recognized as such. Subtle casuistry cannot weaken this argument. If we say the process is irreversible, and that once the Council has recognized pontifical infallibility, it opens up a new awareness that cannot then be closed, we must also suppose either that the Council no longer recognizes papal infallibility or that it continues to acknowledge it. In the latter case, the whole force of papal infallibility still comes from its recognition by the Council. In the former instance, infallibility cannot be maintained unless the pope himself maintains it or a third party affirms it. Then this third party becomes the final criterion, since infallibility recognized by no one is meaningless. Where the pope sees himself (and proclaims himself) as infallible, we are no longer within the limits of our hypothesis and have come to the only intelligible form the concept has: first-person infallibility.

In sum: to say "*p* is infallible" without adding "and I, when I affirm this, am also infallible," amounts to making infallibility totally irrelevant.

"I am infallible" would thus be the only proposition that holds. But this proposition is incommunicable. The only communication possible would be to convince another to accept my statement "I am infallible" without his becoming aware that he too must be infallible in order to accept my infallible proposition. If he perceives his own infallibility—in the first person: "when I affirm this, I too am infallible"—he becomes the conscious criterion and judge of infallibility.

In order to be communicable, the proposition "I am infallible" must be able to elicit the assent of another: "Yes, you are infallible," which also implies, "and my recognizing your infallibility is also infallible." Both expressions must be equally infallible; otherwise they are meaningless. If I can err when I affirm, "You are infallible," in response to *your* declaration, "I am infallible," *your* affirmation of infallibility is no longer infallible for me.

Or again, this infallibility cannot be proven by arguments stronger than those that are rooted upon an infallibility held in common by the one who affirms his own infallibility and by whoever confirms it. To say, "I am infallible because God, who is infallible, has promised it to me," implies, if it is to be communicated to others (even over and above any other presuppositions), that whoever accepts my statement cannot be mistaken. So my infallibility depends on the infallibility of his understanding and agreement, and not on my "divine credentials." I can appeal to natural reason and its evidence to make the other understand my argument, and then this rational evidence becomes the touchstone of my infallibility as far as he is

concerned. But I cannot give him *more* infallibility than he already has. If I depend on the infallibility of his reason, then that guarantees my own infallibility. My "higher" infallibility, if in fact it exists, is incommunicable.

This means that infallibility is unverifiable because it is its own principle of verification. If it were to seek another, this principle would have to be infallible as well. To say, "This act is infallible," amounts to saying, "This act has in itself its own principle of verification."

Obviously there is still a way out of this solipsistic impasse, and indeed, history shows us that infallibility takes the form of a collectivity that claims the privilege of infallibility. In the first person to be sure, but in the first-person plural: *"We are infallible."*

Without doubt, we can go much further with the plural: the Church, the Council, and the pope, all three of us, *we* are infallible since Christ promised the assistance of the Spirit until the end of time (even if the form in which this infallibility expresses itself differs in every case). But we are still at a dead end and out of communication with—may I say even excommunicated from?—the outside world. We lack communication not only with an external world, but also with that part of *ourselves* that collectively or personally remains outside our group and that questions the reason, or the function, or the justification, or even the suitability of our infallibility. If someone in the bosom of the Church—that is, if one within the us—asks for "proof" or reasons for his own infallibility, we cannot answer him, since he cannot jump over his own shadow. You cannot be infallible and demand reasons for this infallibility at the same time. In other words:

Papal infallibility is the same as my own (i.e., the Council's, the bishop's, the simple Christian's, the person's), even though it manifests itself differently. Still, *we* are infallible, although the others or another (a Council, the pope) may explain my own faith in an explicit fashion, using words and concepts I would not normally use. Infallibility has meaning as long as it constitutes *us*, a unified and homogeneous whole. But as soon as any sense of separation, alienation, or estrangement comes between *us*, our common infallibility breaks down. Infallibility becomes *their* infallibility and is no longer my own. The moment I stop believing that the others (or another) are expressing my own faith, they no longer express it, and their infallibility is only their own, in which I cannot participate. Infallibility is only *ad usum nostrorum*, and thus a true sign of distortion.

But isn't this what tradition has always said when it insists that infallibility has no sense except within the faith? Of what use is it to want to prove it or submit it to philosophical analysis? It would simply become a tautology if we did. Infallibility is quite tenable as a truism, but becomes meaningless when we try to separate it from the circle of faith and defend it as a truth in itself or as a separate dogma.

What is relevant here is not so much this internal crisis of infallibility that currently troubles so many Christians as the philosophical solipsism inherent in any infallibility. Whatever entity believes itself infallible—individual, collective, or moral—ex-communicates itself from everything else. Moreover, even on the very level where a person believes himself infallible he cannot establish communion with others. And there is no human or natural remedy for this; my infallibility is without appeal.

Modern Man believes himself infallible by virtue of his humanity and so has excommunicated himself from other animals at this level.[20] When philosophers appeal to a reason

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[20] This prompts me to note that precisely this modern excommunication is the reason so-called civilized Man finds it difficult to understand the seemingly bizarre attitude of the so-called primitive in his relations with animals, taboos, totems, regulations, etc. The problem of sacrifice is also intimately connected to this problematic. Cf., to cite a classic work, W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion*

they uncritically consider infallible, they alienate themselves both from one another and from that part of mankind that does not share this pattern of intelligibility. Insofar as they believe themselves infallible, Christians remain united among themselves to be sure, but they distance themselves from the rest of humanity, and no amount of dialogue can reestablish communication; insofar as bishops, priests, and the pope believe that they possess the personal privilege of infallibility (albeit in different degrees), they separate themselves from and remain "incommunicado" for those who do not have the same privilege.[21] The snare of solipsism is at hand! We could multiply these examples within the realm of religion (the saint is always one "set apart") as well as in the secular sphere. All privilege confers some power, but at the same time it isolates, makes different.

Here a philosopher would speak of solipsism, a historian of religions of spiritual totemism,[22] a sociologist of esotericism, and so on. Whatever the name, it follows from the same principle: realizing identity through differentiation and affirming difference by separation.[23]

I, the pope, the party, the state, the nation—we, the bishops, the Christians, the democrats, the socialists—we cannot err. To be sure, we can be mistaken about a good many specific things and ideas, but in the general thrust of our life, our orientation, our ideals, and so on, we are infallible. Such affirmations make no sense for those outside my group, outside the *us* that speaks in each instance, because my infallibility is meaningful only for me and for those who participate in it with me. For you it would have only the sense that *you* give it by (fallibly) interpreting me.

We could express it thus: In each case, infallibility bears its own hermeneutic and is only as infallible as that hermeneutic. The "weight" of infallibility, then, lies on the hermeneutic and not on the infallibility affirmed. So the infallibility depends completely on the validity of its hermeneutic. On the other hand, infallibility without a hermeneutic is closed in on itself and shirks its genuine duty, to communicate the truth. History simply confirms this point.

But, at bottom, doesn't an infallible declaration serve as a concrete hermeneutic of the intellectual content of the act of faith? Doesn't declaring a proposition infallible, or more precisely declaring a judgment infallible, really amount to declaring how the proposition or judgment in question ought to be interpreted?

All this is not to say that the concept of infallibility ought to be completely rejected. The notion of infallibility opens up a hope of going beyond the rationalist and even intellectualist framework of much of contemporary culture, provided it is rethought, reformed, and, I daresay, converted.

A more rigorous examination of the statement "We are infallible" leads us to the conclusion of our thesis. Indeed, if it is to be intelligible, the phrase cannot be verified except by

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of the Semites (New York: Appleton, 1889), 251ff.: "The life of his clansman was sacred to him [early man], not because he was a man, but because he was a kinsman; and, in like manner, the life of an animal of his totem kind is sacred to the savage, not because it is animate, but because he and it are sprung from the same stock and are cousins to one another" (267).

[21] Need I quote the remark of a friend who said, "Heaven for the temperature, but hell for the company!"? The community of sinners would seem much more animated, intense, and human than the communion of the "perfect."

[22] Cf. a statement that is valid outside its immediate context: "Among primitive peoples there are no binding precepts of conduct except those that rest on the principles of kinship" (W. Robertson Smith, op. cit., 269).

[23] Elsewhere I have tried to show that the primacy of the principle of noncontradiction broadly characterizes Western (Semitic) culture and that the primacy of the principle of identity can explain the character of Oriental (Indian) thought. Cf. my *Mystère du culte*, op. cit., 37ff.

a principle of verification that "we" all recognize. Now if I am not within this group, this *us* that is infallible, I cannot verify this affirmation. The Roman Church's doctrine of infallibility, recognizing that there is only one single subject of infallibility (the Church, despite the many voices), implicitly takes the stand that the Church is the representative of the entire humankind, that the Church is the *sacramentum mundi*, the *humanitas perfecta*, a leaven on behalf of the whole. If the underlying ecclesiology is disputed, the doctrine of a vicarious infallibility loses its ground.

Human Infallibility

If infallibility sets its own limits and the only given human limits are those of humankind itself, does not affirming that humanity taken as a whole is infallible amount to a tautology? And not only in a godless universe, but also in a theistic world? Yet what is wisdom if not the discovery of tautologies? What is evidence if not a qualified tautology? But let us return to our immediate concern.

There is nonetheless a fundamental difference between a purely epistemological infallibility that admits no "point" (center, being, principle—whatever one may call it) outside or above itself, and a more ontological infallibility on the order of grace, which acknowledges a transcendent reference point usually called God. In the first hypothesis, infallibility without an alpha or omega point would be a truism, since there would be nothing outside humanity to judge the fallibility or infallibility of anything; whereas in the second case infallibility becomes the expression of a hope, since it is quite conceivable that humanity could "fall," "fail," and not accomplish its destiny, not fulfill itself.

But is there a criterion outside humanity that determines if we have erred? Even if we admit some revelation of the truth, we must be able to perceive and understand it. If, suddenly, mankind saw clearly that $2 + 2 = 5$, we could no longer call this enunciation false. We would say that historical documents prove that once Men believed $2 + 2 = 4$, and the most learned would say that *what* was once called 4 is today called 5, so that it is all a question of semantics; but no one could now say that 5 is the wrong answer. But this amounts to saying that we all agree in denying the meaningful possibility of $2 + 2 = 4$. And this confirms our thesis, namely that we believe, and we cannot *not* but believe, in human infallibility. But in what areas?

Theology smiles a bit here and reminds us that infallibility does not deal with speculative propositions, but with the existential facts of faith and morals. So the problem is not to brood over whether 2 and 2 shall ever be 4, but whether torture, for instance, could sometimes be justified. According to a certain theistic hypothesis, it is possible that practically all mankind could go astray, and that only a prophet or a very small "remnant" would be left as a reminder that it has erred, that its ways are not the ways of truth, justice, or love. Any deep reflection on infallibility deals with questions that far surpass the limited problematic of infallible judgments and specific propositions.

Yet we cannot play games with history: For centuries hardly anyone found slavery immoral, or punishment according to the *lex talionis* unjust. Nor is there the slightest doubt that human self-understanding has sensibly changed in its long millennia of history.

We are not, however, concerned with mere doctrinal speculation on the nature of change. Infallibility need not be challenged because doctrines have changed with the times. The realm of infallibility, as we have said before, is not that of general ideas or abstract formulations. Infallibility belongs to the existential domain of my personal decision, the realm of orthopraxis. To return to our example of the Assumption: What is infallible would be the

decision to believe in the dogma, that is, the human act that commits itself to a particular belief following a particular guidance.

These considerations place us in a proper perspective for a final philosophical reflection. Within the hypothesis of a complete negation of transcendence (admitting that this were possible), infallibility would amount to a truism, even if we make mankind its subject. Here, if everyone is infallible, no one is, because there is no criterion except personal perspective. If, however, we follow the other hypothesis, that is, if we admit transcendence, infallibility could be an external and gratuitous promise of that very transcendence (this is its mythical aspect) or it could become a fertile tautology that helps us to better grasp the nature of transcendence and at the same time responds with hope to the deepest human faith. We can consider infallibility (starting at the bottom) as the epistemological condition for human reason. We can also view it (starting at the top) as a grace bestowed upon a particular group. The first and purely "philosophical" notion of a universal infallibility is insufficient; the second and exclusively "theological" notion of an elitist infallibility is not satisfying. We are looking for a certain synthesis in our analysis of infallibility, perhaps as a conquest, as an omega point if we prefer, which becomes real to the extent that we recognize it. Grace is not excluded, but neither is nature. This is our final point.

Infallibility and Orthopraxis

The aim of any religion is to save or to free Man. No matter how we interpret this salvation or liberation, religion is always the means by which Man arrives at his destination, reaches the other shore. Now in order to save or free myself, I must *do* something, even if this act is only an interior act of faith or a mere ritual affair. This leads us to say that what constitutes the core of religion is not a doctrine but an act, even if this act is considered to be adherence to a doctrine. In other words, *orthopraxis*, not orthodoxy, is the constitutive element of religion. Thus, as a religious phenomenon, infallibility is grounded in orthopraxis. Having considered it to stem exclusively from the sphere of orthodoxy has been the cause of more than one misunderstanding and many an insurmountable difficulty.[24]

As we have said, strictly speaking there are no infallible truths or propositions, only infallible "definitions," that is, affirm actions, infallible acts. In certain "educated" milieus, laughter greeted those who naively thought the Catholic dogma of infallibility was a sort of insurance against sinning. Nevertheless these "ignorant" people, who doubtless misunderstood the dogma, at least perceived that infallibility concerns action not speculation, orthopraxis not orthodoxy; they saw that infallibility belongs not to theory but to life as it is lived.

This is not to say that orthodoxy does not have its rights, and a raison d'être in its proper domain. But, within its limits, there is scarcely room for pluralism, except for a very restricted pluralism that accepts different formulations only provided they say the same thing or diverse concepts provided they are equivalent. On the contrary, pluralism is connatural to orthopraxis because every act is unique. Orthopraxis is characterized by a transconceptual intentionality of the action itself, rather than by an (orthodox) identity of content. We could say that "all roads lead to Rome"; indeed, provided they are genuine roads and not dead ends, that is, provided we don't stop—even at Rome![25]

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[24] Cf. Ch. Journet, *L'Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée, 1955), vol. 1, chapter 8, where the author has generally succeeded in salvaging papal infallibility once one accepts its context.

[25] Roman Catholic positions, for example, could more easily find agreement with the Protestant intuitions if the discussions would shift from the realm of *orthodoxy* to *orthopraxis*.

In this light, infallibility appears as good news. It is tantamount to that confidence in Life, or in Providence if we wish, or in the presence of the Holy Spirit if we prefer, which sustains a realistic optimism about the meaning of human existence and about the sense of the universe. It also leads to the profound conviction that our life is not a meaningless passion, that it is not a mistake, that to have lived and suffered are values that cannot be effaced, that remain even if forgotten. But let us proceed step by step.

I cannot meaningfully say that I am infallible if you do not accept my statement; we cannot declare ourselves infallible if we exclude the very people to whom we declare this, because the affirmation would make no sense to them. A real proclamation of infallibility must embrace the entire world and include in "us" all who do not excommunicate themselves from it.

A pioneering and particularizing effort was needed to achieve this reflective awareness that humanity is infallible; the Roman Church provides one striking example. But now an osmosis is also necessary in order to spread this awareness, this awakening of consciousness, from some "high places" of the world religions to all humanity, in order to promote throughout the world what some would call a process of "consciencialization," and what others, perhaps, would call a step toward authentic "evangelization." We are unraveling here a universal dynamism active in almost every sphere: what was once the privilege of a minority has passed to an ever-increasing majority, if not yet in fact then at least by right. We need not think only of technology, which has placed in the hands of the many—for good or ill—what had once been the privilege of the few. We can and must also consider the change in the notion of God, that classic archetype that has dominated the material and spiritual economy for over four thousand years. Ever since polytheism was swallowed by monotheism, the positive value of any object has been seen as a function of its scarcity.

God is the greatest value, so there can be only one, and he must have only one name. Religion is the depository of ultimate values, hence it must be one. Gold is one of the most beautiful and the rarest metal, so it must also be the dearest—most costly as well as most precious (a link that confirms what we have been saying). Love between a man and a woman is the greatest love; it must not therefore be portioned out. We could go on like this and give examples from the most diverse fields. Heaven or salvation is what everyone wants most, therefore it must be rare, that is, the destiny of very few. We find this *sensus* and *consensus fidelium*—the belief that the number of the elect is always very small—in practically all religions up to and including those of recent times.[26] It is still widespread among the traditional "faithful" of nearly every religion and is found even in modern secular religions. In spite of all modern democratization, we still think in modified oligarchic categories. Today it is no longer blood, race, or religion, but money, power, knowledge, education, and even the passport that make the difference.

Given this context we can understand why infallibility was considered a privilege, and we might add that now the privilege of the "privileged" is to share what had before been "concentrated" in one segment of humanity. Could not the salvation histories of Israel and of the Church lend themselves to just this interpretation? What about the parables of the salt, the leaven, and the light?[27]

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[26] Membership in the Communist Party is a privilege to which all are not called. Who then is the good humanist? The good atheist? Where do we find the real Christian? The perfect Buddhist? Here scarcity is the criterion of authenticity.

[27] This idea should prove fruitful in the important contemporary problem of the encounter of religions. It is not a question of universalizing at the price of a superficiality that neglects the concrete. On the contrary, it is a matter of sharing, participating, growing together.

But this cannot be proclaimed by saying, "I am infallible, and you will be too if you believe me." We have already seen that it is impossible to communicate infallibility. Nor can we say, "We Christians are infallible, but you non-Christians are not," since this declaration—assuming it is not blasphemous—is incomprehensible as well as incommunicable. Communication is possible only within a preexisting communion. Communication only makes explicit or reveals this underlying communion. The Christian does not just transmit the news: "Christ is risen"; he adds immediately, "And we—you also—are risen with him."

This does not mean that salvation is automatic or that infallibility guarantees an insipid or facile optimism that mankind cannot go wrong. It is not a question of eliminating the mystery of existence or of preaching a happy ending, come what may. On the contrary, the awareness of infallibility means assuming a new responsibility.

In the language of modern philosophy, we could say that what is involved is discovering the passage from infallibility as an *existenzielle*, as a character peculiar to a group or even to a person, to infallibility as an *existenzial*, as a category of human existence. But this is not just a mechanical shift of gears, it is a *pascha* marked by strife, rupture, death, resurrection—and certainly it is not an individual privilege but something bestowed upon mankind ex officio.

Infallibility: Cosmic Hope and Eschatological Vision

We can and even should ask ourselves what infallibility may mean, given this universal perspective. Does it not become self-defeating? What does it mean to say that humanity as a whole cannot err if the individual can, or that there is no criterion to distinguish the fallible from the infallible? If everyone is infallible, then no one is.

We can look for an answer on two levels, the personal and the cosmic.

At the level of the person, we could say that we are infallible in what we believe and to the extent we believe in it. For this reason, our faith will save us. Good faith does not save because it is "subjectively" true even if it is "objectively" false; good faith saves because it is infallible (and here the word "infallible" has its proper orthopractical character). Bad faith condemns not because it is false, but because it is bad, because it wants to err. Nevertheless, nothing prevents us at this level from believing that this saving faith is expressed through the Church or any other agency. I am merely situating these beliefs in a context that is more universal and, it seems to me, more true.

At the cosmic level, infallibility is of *kairological* and capital importance, precisely today when we run the risk of panic and collective hysteria on a worldwide scale. To be sure, Mankind can commit suicide, but even if it is "objectively" false; good faith saves because it is infallible all planetary life. Modern pessimism cannot be construed as a fruit of the somber humors of a few people; it results from a profound analysis of the current situation. Human infallibility does not present itself as a sort of intellectual utopia or as an automatic destiny so universal that it lacks content. It presents itself by contrast as a challenge, as a message that is like a real "sign raised among the nations" (as the First Vatican Council had quoted[28]), as a hope that saves. The important thing is this good news that the peoples of goodwill must proclaim to the four corners of the earth.[29] Humanity is infallible. And this amounts to an authentic *kerygma* of salvation. In fact, one of the most urgent tasks for our times is to proclaim that humanity is on the road to a new heaven and a new earth (be they called alpha, omega, or nothing). That someone sees a personal power directing this human tumult from

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[28] Cf. Is 11:12. In the context cited, cf. Denz.-Schön. 3014.

[29] Cf. Mk 16:15, etc. Moreover, this is the only valid exegesis from the pastoral point of view.

on high, where another envisions a cosmic dynamism (theories that differ on the doctrinal level), does not touch the heart of what we have been saying. Christians should not claim a monopoly here; quite the contrary, they proclaim from the rooftops a message that belongs to and affects all creation.[30]

This human infallibility is not *actu*, in actuality, but *potentia*, in potency we might say, reviving old categories; it is not automatic or fated, but becomes real only thanks to a principle, a divine seed—a Church, one could add—that sustains the hope of mankind toward this infallible end, despite numerous failings. Human infallibility has an eschatological character—not that of a "happy end" according to our dreams.

Just as belief in the redemption convinced Christians that the creation was good, so now accepting the Church's infallibility can make them confident that humanity as such is a bearer of infallible values.[31] The theological virtues are also cosmological.[32] The belief in this cosmic infallibility restores confidence in ourselves. It is already eschatological, it belongs to the Spirit, to the divine immanence permeating the universe. Infallibility is an expression of a truly secular spirituality: Man is infallible! But he must accept the risk this entails. It is not that he cannot fail, but that he does not need to; that he can survive.

"In theological language, does infallibility mean eliminating risk?" we are asked.[33] I would answer plainly: Authentic infallibility entails the most complete assumption of risk, for the greatest risk is to accept the infallibility of each moment of our life, fully aware that the next moment may well bring another insight because a new reality dawns upon us and not because, pleading fallibility, we refrained from exhausting the present. As long as we leave loopholes in our affirmations, as long as we do not commit ourselves totally to what we say and believe, with all the risk that this implies; as long as we are not identified with ourselves, that is, as long as we do not truly express who we are; in short, as long as we do not take infallibility seriously, we have not attained that human maturity that also entails belief in and respect for the infallibility of others. This means at the same time recognizing our own insufficiency, acknowledging that I do not exhaust the totality of human experience. It impels us toward dialogue. And like a medieval tourney or the Roman games, authentic dialogue is an experience of death—but also of resurrection.

I see in the phenomenon of infallibility existing in so many human traditions a memorable gesture in the awakening of human awareness. This should not be interpreted as in any way wanting to rescue a dogma, or as a strategic shifting of perspective. It entails what I still consider a Christian belief, namely a catholic concern for the entire cosmos, humankind in particular, and a vision that sees the act of Christ in a universal perspective.

Infallibility may thus be seen as an unhappy formulation of a grand awareness, not that a little group has a divine privilege, but that Man now has the burden of this dignity.

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[30] "To some extent, all culture is a gigantic effort to mask this [death, want, destruction . . .], to give the future the simulacrum of safety by making activity repetitive, expective—'to make the future predictable by making it conform to the past'" (Clyde Kluckhohn, "Myths and Rituals," in *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. W. A. Lessa and E. Z. Vogt, 2nd ed. [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], 152).

[31] We ought not to underestimate the importance of the ecclesial *hapax* that the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, represents.

[32] Cf. R. Panikkar, "The Relation of Christians to Their Non-Christian Surroundings," in *Christian Revelation and World Religions*, ed. J. Neuner (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 148ff., reprinted as "Christians and So-Called 'Non-Christians," *Cross Currents* 21, no. 3 (Summer–Fall 1972): 281–308.

[33] Cf. E. Castelli in his Introduction to *Débats sur le langage théologique* (Paris: Aubier, 1969), 13, and his opening remarks to the volume *L'Infaillibilité*, op. cit., 17–26.

The danger now lies in not daring to announce it to the entire universe, not daring to share this privilege, not daring to assume responsibility for it. We are all thrown together in this adventure that propels us closer and closer to the perfect Man—εισ ανδρα τελειον[34]—or, if we prefer, to the free reception of the Spirit: to be a Man, a fallible being who must believe himself infallible in order to survive. The experience of the *We* amounts to the realization of the *ātman* (*brahman*).

Human infallibility, I repeat, is what places in a hopeful perspective the awareness, increasingly widespread among the peoples of the world, of having to struggle against forces that are capable of threatening mankind and life on earth with total extinction.[35] Countless groups (which although they may not be connected with each other have basically the same trait) bear witness to this vital instinct of the human community. I am referring, of course, to peace movements, antinuclear groups, ecological societies, alternative lifestyles, and so on. These show that mankind chooses life over death. The danger of the earth being involved in an atomic explosion is real. It is a possibility we are forced to acknowledge; indeed, many believe that it may very likely become reality. The traditional Christian certainty of *non prevalebunt!*[36] may offer here hope for the whole planet. According to an opinion widely diffused in the patristic tradition, the Church is not simply a private association but the "cosmic mystery" of reality.

It is not humanly possible to experience total annihilation. The dogma of infallibility can perhaps help us to understand that this eventuality, unthinkable but possible, will not occur "before everything has been completed."

If we are to use a formula, we might cite the famous statement by Vincent of Lérins,[37] which is often used improperly and seldom interpreted correctly. It could be understood not in the sense that the concrete truth of the Church is universal, but that the criterion of truth is universality, universal consensus.

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[34] Cf. Eph 4:13; Col 1:28; 2 Tim 3:17; Jas 3:2.

[35] Cf. the now famous text by J. Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

[36] Cf. Mt 16:18.

[37] *Commonitorium* 1.2 (PL 50.640): "Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprie catholicum, quod ipse vis nominis ratioque declarat, quae omnia fere universaliter comprehendit" [that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all, that is truly and in the strictest sense catholic, which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally].

3

HERMENEUTICS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Religion as Freedom

ψεμεισ γαρ επ ελευθερια
εκλθητε

In libertatem vocati estis.

*Freedom claimed you when you
were called.*

Gal 5:13*

Freedom of Religion

και η αληθεια ελευθερωσει υμασ
et veritas liberabit vos.[1]

It is undeniable that our epoch is presently undergoing an important, even disruptive, change in the notion and above all the experience of human freedom. We may ascertain this more clearly by studying the different ways of dealing with the age-old problem of the relations between freedom and religion.

First, I shall try to depict this change, one of the most striking turnabouts of our day. Since the sociological phenomena of freedom and liberation are well known, I shall confine myself to underscoring the philosophical problematic regarding religious freedom.

Second, I shall attempt to show that this change runs much deeper than might appear at first glance. It implies a new awareness of human religiousness—I wonder if it could be called transmythicization? It is in fact Man's religious dimension that today undergoes this profound and I hope purifying, transformation.

In short, the *hermeneutic of the freedom of religion* brings me to consider *religion as freedom*. To recognize the "freedom of religion" amounts to disclosing the *religiousness of freedom* and consequently *religion as freedom*. This is the thesis I shall develop.

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* Knox translation, trying to bring together the *ecclesia* with the call, precisely, to freedom.
[1] Jn 8:32: "And truth shall set you free."

Freedom as a Duty

Traditional Western thinking has repeatedly proclaimed the freedom of *religion* and thus even of the religious *act*, but has somehow neglected the concrete *Man* himself, the ultimate subject of this free act. The reasoning went somewhat like this: Man has a duty to follow the true religion because he is made for truth, the true religion incarnates the truth, and truth is the good. To "help" the individual to perform that duty is a supremely moral act. If Man finds himself faced with the choice between good and evil, this comes from a weakness of his freedom. God is perfectly free and yet he is not confronted with the choice between good and evil. Certainly, the free act, by definition, has to allow for its own negation. But strictly speaking, Man is not free to choose evil; he merely has the possibility of doing so by being carried away by the attraction of evil, and if he takes this road, he sins. If, then, a higher authority, in spite of the individual's will, steers him clear of evil by constraining him to follow the good and the true path, his freedom is not violated. Evil is here considered error, and goodness truth. Hence if the Church or the emperor, for instance, does someone violence by wresting the individual from error, the latter is only being helped to become free. In all these traditional considerations freedom has from the start an ambivalent character, but its negative taint is stressed: It is the abuse of the freedom to sin, to refuse God's gift, to choose evil. Significantly enough, the first act of freedom of which the Bible tells us is Adam's sin, and the first creaturely act it describes is another abuse of freedom, the sin of the angels: in both instances, a misuse of freedom to disobey. In order to avoid making God responsible for the world's ills, evil was imputed to freedom. Evil is then the result of freedom. No wonder that freedom has not had a very good reputation. "Libertas perditionis"[2] and "libertas erroris"[3] are two quotations from St. Augustine that the popes of the past century were fond of quoting.

Following this mood, freedom has been allied with contingency, with human limitations and imperfections. Man is free because he can say no, even—mainly?—to God. Faced with a free choice is Man's *duty* to choose the good and thus the truth. Freedom is the price Man must pay to become like God, and for this, freedom is ambivalent, at once a good and an imperfection. Perfect freedom would make Man God. The fissure between the objective and the subjective order of things is the gauge of Man's creatureliness. Every Man, precisely because he is free, chooses "his" good. Further, since Aristotle it is recognized that this good can only be defined as that to which the will is directed. Freedom always makes a choice *sub specie boni*, but the fissure appears when this subjective good to which the will is directed is not at the same time an objective truth. Objective truth is obscured by passions and selfishness. Error and evil are possible in the human sphere precisely because the objective and the subjective do not coincide. Freedom is the guarantor, so to speak, of Man's responsibility, his merit and his dignity, but it is also answerable for error and evil. The vision of Man "condemned to be free" is but a recent expression of a traditional Western notion.

In the social life of church and state, the argument was pursued in the most logical fashion. The heretic is he who voluntarily chooses error; hence he sins against human nature, for Man is a rational animal and the heretic refuses to accept truth. One is not humanly, that is, rationally, free to opt for truth or error, since true freedom is to choose the truth. It alone will set us free. Man is only potentially free; he acquires more and more freedom in the extent to which he chooses, and lives in, the truth. But the church being the "depository" of truth, there is no question of a free choice between belonging or not belonging to it (only ignorance in good faith can save the infidel). You are not morally free when facing the truth;

² Denz.-Schön. 3178.
³ Denz.-Schön. 2731.

even ignorance can be culpable. So it is not a matter of a free choice, but rather of a free—spontaneous and reasonable—adherence to truth, since you have acknowledged the right of truth and Man's duty to adhere to it. Truth is liberating, but you must first acknowledge the duty to embrace it; only then does liberation ensue. You cannot even recognize truth if you are not rooted in it. Only if we "believe in it," if we are its "disciples," if we "know" the truth, will it free us. Morality in the broadest sense is a sine qua non for adherence to truth. Even to devote oneself to philosophy, and thus to searching out the truth, one was obliged in several cultures to evince a practical and moral engagement. If our works are not good we will not even be able to recognize truth, and if we do not recognize truth wherever it is, wherever it shows itself, we may very well doubt we are on the way to the good.

The same was traditional in the sociopolitical sphere for thousands of years: If you escape your tribe you shall be killed; you have to realize your being within your caste, guild, class, nation. The slave, the outcast, the rebel will have to pay with his life for his excommunication. In many countries the passport is still a privilege and not a right. If the count, the duke, the king, the emperor, but equally so if the president, the parliament, the party, or the country calls you, you have to obey and cannot object. From the days of Arjuna, the first conscientious objector who was convinced or at least defeated by Lord Krishna, until our recent times, you could not even argue against the idea not only that the common good has the primacy, but that it is the hierarchical status quo that determines the common good.

It is noteworthy that the very word "religion," whether in its etymology or its numerous classical usages, always indicates a bond, a decision, an obligation, a reversal (when it is not a scruple, a superstition, etc.). In other words, religion usually indicates a duty, a dependence, an obedience, an acknowledgment of our contingency, and it is this same set of ideas concerning dependence and obligation that seems so opposed to any notion centering on autonomy and freedom.

The famous pontifical condemnations, in the last century and the beginning of our own, of so-called freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, freethinkers, liberalism, and so forth, show just how far the conviction was kept alive that freedom is a duty (and equally a danger) and how the connotation of the word was always rather pejorative. To recognize the dangers of freedom, and the ravages of libertinism, to accept our ties and our limits, to be on guard against a spirit of independence, and our own judgments—Christian spirituality vigorously emphasized these many negative characteristics of its day in order to foster obedience and humility, and to bolster the unflagging effort toward perfection. Freedom was considered the stronghold of Man's self-assertive will standing against the rights of God or against the objective rights of truth. *Plato amicus, sed magis amica veritas; pereat mundus, sed iustitia adimpleatur; oboedentia tutior;*[4] and others were so many maxims with the only possible alternative of either stubborn self-assertion, by an abuse of our freedom, or of submission to God (*cui servire regnare est*, we were told[5]) through one's superiors. From Plato and the Stoics up to and including the majority of Christian writers, freedom was found pejoratively associated with autarchy, independence, self-mastery, and so with pride, self-sufficiency, the rejection of the bonds that bind us and that "make" Man: ελευθερον το αρκον εαυτου (*eleutheron to archon eautou*).[6] But Man, so they said, is neither his own αρχη (*arche*) nor his own αρχον (*archon*).

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[4] "I am a good friend of Plato, but still more a friend with truth; may the world perish, but let justice be fulfilled; obedience is the surest thing."

[5] "Serving him means to reign."

[6] *Pseud.* Plat., *Def.* 415f.

Certainly, it was said, there is a natural law, all authority comes from God, who is a God of freedom; one must resist an unjust law, and so on. But all these arguments could not be used against the authority that, they said, comes from God. Individual conscience is doubtless the final arbiter—here one knowingly quotes St. Thomas—but the individual cannot constantly be questioning everything; he lacks the necessary training or data. Once you have, so to speak, examined the Church's credentials as the vehicle of revelation, once you have critically acknowledged that she possesses the authority of God and the promise of the Holy Spirit's assistance, you regard yourself as justified in signing a blank affidavit and believing everything she teaches with no further need to question or take other steps. It would be interesting in this regard to study what tradition has said on the famous problem of regicide. The Gesuit Mariana was condemned by Church and state.

We should ponder the fact that Giordano Bruno could escape the jurisdiction of the Church as little as a citizen of a modern nation can escape the power of the state by renouncing his nationality. A certificate of birth may today bind an individual more than a certificate of baptism.

Historically speaking one could put forward the hypothesis that the communist ideology seems to be the successor of this mentality, which now many of the traditional religions want to overcome. I am not saying that there are no differences between the "people of Israel," the "church of God," and the "party," or that "corporate destiny" is the same as "collective mission." I am signaling a common horizon.

Whatever this may be, objectivity here carries the day over subjectivity, essential truth over existential authenticity, the community over the person, and, by an interesting transference from the epistemological to the ontological sphere, a certain supernaturalism prevails over the natural. And it is to this "inferior" realm of the natural that the so-called rights of Man specifically belong. That there be no misunderstanding here: It would be premature, even false, to reject utterly this hierarchical and objective conception of the universe. We have only tried to describe it as briefly as possible. *Intelligenti pauca.*[7]

Freedom as a Right

Today's situation begins to be different. The same words previously charged with negative connotations now convey positive values. The climate is changing, not only in some parts of the so-called secular world but in the religious world as well. The ecumenical Council of Churches speaks of tolerance and understanding, the Second Vatican Council of religious freedom, Hinduism of a new interpretation of caste, Eurocommunism strikes a humanistic and democratic note, and so on.[8]

The great modern myths—suspect not long ago in ecclesiastical circles—such as tolerance, dialogue, pluralism, democracy, justice, progress, and so on, have as their common denominator the more or less explicit idea that freedom is a supreme and inalienable right of the human person and so that freedom excels any other value whatsoever. We begin these days to speak of the *rights* of Man, we even proclaim them in a "charter." Many of us remember the criticisms voiced against the Declaration of San Francisco in 1945: "The duties of Man

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[7] Cf. "Libertad de pensamiento," in my book *Humanismo y Cruz* (Madrid: Rialp, 1963), 77–89—now in Volume III of this *Opera Omnia*—for the various pertinent references that I excuse myself from giving here, and for an understanding and defense of the traditional attitude.

[8] Cf., as a single and impossible example a few decades ago, the Fall 1977 issue (14, no. 4) of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* dedicated to "Religious Liberty in the Crossfire of Creeds."

should rather have been proclaimed . . . !" But let us not forget that when victorious Japan in the Versailles treaty, in 1919, proposed, when drafting the Covenant of the League of Nations, that race or nationality should not be discriminating factors, in law or in fact, it was defeated, mainly because of the opposition of Britain and the United States of America.

The change cuts deep. We only now begin to take account of it. In fact we are still submerged, so to speak, in the transition, and most of these words still retain a disquieting ambivalence. This is easily verified by reading Kierkegaard or modern existentialism or the Christian literary output since the Second World War on the tension between the church and the modern world, and so on. Dictatorship was not a bad word only a couple of generations ago. Dictatorship of the proletariat could be a very positive slogan. Today, everywhere we have "peoples' democracies." It all may be a tactic, but this is irrelevant for our thesis. The important change is that this is the general language employed by those of the right and those of the left. We are entering a new myth.

To be sure, for perhaps thousands of years there have been aristocrats of the spirit who would not be tied up by racial, social, religious, and other differences, but such ideals had to remain esoteric. There were some who said we Men are all brethren, even the enemies should be loved, no degrading distinction should be made between male and female, Greek and Jew, rich and poor. Yet all this was taken not only *cum grano salis*, but also embedded in a larger horizon of a structured, hierarchical, and immutable objective order: "Slaves, obey your masters!"

But we may leave aside the study of historical facts to indicate certain philosophical features that seem to belong to the *mythemes* of our contemporary myth.

a. In the first place, there is clearly a shift in emphasis from the objective to the subjective, from objective truth to subjective truth, from the category of essences to that of existences. What seems above all important today is the human person and his subjectivity, not the objective order of ideas or the exigencies of a theoretical objectivity deemed independent of Man and superior to him.

It is not only, nor basically, a moral consideration that leads us to recognize that we should not impose upon others something they do not readily accept. This would bring us to suppose that the first hypothesis is itself immoral, and we do not believe this is so. We should not commit the *katachronism* of judging a past era with ideas current today. Although the first worldview may lend itself to an abuse of authority, appropriate distinctions were in fact drawn to avoid, at least theoretically, the abuse of power and the constraint of conscience. In spite of all possible manipulations there was always a transcendent and supreme God. On the other hand, a certain liberal or liberalist notion might also lead to a disregard for the individual—rendered incapable of shouldering his own responsibilities, overwhelmed as he is by the spiritual, intellectual, or material powers that surround him. With habeas corpus and "constitutional rights" there may be as much human exploitation as without them. We are speaking of a change in consciousness and not endorsing an idea of human linear progress—although this change is obviously not without practical consequences. Indifference toward the weak and noninterference in our neighbor's calamities may be sheer cowardice and callousness cloaked in "respect" for their "freedom." The moral questions stem from another order altogether and they are extant in both modes of thought we are presently studying.

Our problem is equally independent of any psychological consideration of the subjective convictions of individuals. It goes without saying that we must respect the awareness of others, that there are different psychological types, that what carries conviction for some may not for others, that we can approach reality by several paths and that there can be a

healthy perspectivism. All this was well known before today. The rights of subjectivity are not purely a psychological affair.

The moral and psychological issues are two very important questions in which the modern era has taken a particular interest, but I believe that the transmythicization we are now studying oversteps these two spheres utterly. We should look for the roots at an ontological level and an anthropological stratum. This new awareness was not totally absent in the past but it was the privilege of the few, whereas now it begins to enter the universal human consciousness.

We are becoming more sensitive to the fact and open to the experience that any objectivity demands a subjectivity, or rather that we should never cut the umbilical cord uniting the two. Hardly anybody, of course, has defended sheer objectivity; nevertheless it was considered to be the decisive element. The tension between the two was not so great precisely because objectivity was based in the subjectivity of God, and God's existence was by and large unquestioned. The modern epoch shows itself more reserved, more respectful and skeptical, when it comes to ascribing ideas and concepts to God. The very objectivity of revelation, for instance, cannot be severed from the subjectivity of the one to whom it is revealed.

At bottom we find a relational awareness recovering importance not only in the realm of science but in other spheres of human life as well. We might mention here the fundamental distinction between an agnostic *relativism*, indifferent to truth, and a *relativity*, aware that truth is a relationship, that beings themselves are relational, quite as much as thoughts and the other products of human culture.

b. Related to the preceding consideration, we may add the primacy of the dignity of the person as a theoretical characteristic of our times. To be sure, people have talked about personal dignity before now, but they had situated Man's dignity in exterior objectivities—insofar as he embodies transcendental values, participates in the divine nature, belongs to a particular religion, nation, class, race, civilization, and so on. The dignity of the person, in the final analysis, was located outside the person. Even today the sole justification for capital punishment (other than atavisms) relies on the dichotomy enforced between the person of the "criminal" and the human dignity he has lost. Civil justice claims to kill the criminal in order to preserve *his* human dignity. The same anthropological justification goes for traditional forms of suicide: "I commit hara-kiri in order to save my personal dignity—which is outside me—by eliminating 'me.'" Modern suicide would be almost the opposite: "I kill myself because I am the last instance."

Our age begins dimly to glimpse that the concrete person embodies the highest possible value, over and above any social or objective category whatsoever. This amounts to discovering that the freedom of the person is an ontological freedom, superior to "objective truth," even to objective religion; and that the person, in its ontological nudity and with all its constitutive ambivalence—for it is ever in relation—always presents a core irreducible to "categories" of abstract truth or goodness. In other words, the particular existence takes precedence over essence or ideas, and so (personal) authenticity proves superior to (objective) truth.

The often violent and impassioned discussions throughout the nineteenth century on freedom in its most varied facets—philosophical, theological, social, political, and so forth—cannot be explained away as a simple speculative disagreement or a difference in perspectives, but as a true crisis of growth in Man himself, appearing in and through a new awareness, although not always expressing itself with sufficient clarity or precision. We may be in the presence of a genuine transmythicization, and it will not help to attempt to shield today's positions with apologetic intent by saying they were already maintained in the traditional notion of Man and theology. To say, for instance, that we learn nonviolence from the Bible is a beautiful confession of one's beliefs, but an exegetical capriole.

Further, the Christian "fact" conceived as static, complete, and potentially accomplished, needing only to expand and be actualized, is rather an Aristotelian category than a Christian exigency. Moreover, to recognize this transmythicization furnishes a proof of the vitality of the Christian faith, which has no need to continually justify itself by an exclusive "fidelity" to the past, but which can also present itself as a "hope" for the One destined to come yet again. The Christian fact need not be understood exclusively as a seed in the process of growing, but it also asks to be seen as a creation ever new, ever approaching the creative act and leaving behind the creaturely state: Man being as much a hope to be as a potency of being. Of course, a mystical vision and a deep intuition leap far beyond these conceptual skeletons, and one has the impression that the great masters of antiquity have even anticipated us. But whatever the outcome, we must also take into account the scandal this language and these theories represent for a traditional mentality, when they are upheld today by thinkers seriously concerned about orthodoxy and fidelity to tradition.

"How can religion be sustained with a thesis like this? Will the whole edifice, not only of Christianity but of all religious life and even all order, not collapse?" Briefly, then, it may appear that we uphold the right to error—not as such, that is, error in the abstract, but error as far as it is incarnated, in a person who follows his or her own conscience, however twisted or erroneous. No need to discuss now this latter possibility; suffice to affirm that *in concreto* there is no higher court of appeal than the conscience and consciousness of the person. Men all have the same rights, and at this level we have renounced any merely objective criterion of truth—since although objective truth need not be denied, it scarcely has any meaning if the concrete subject, the person, does not make it his own. The person in the concretion of his living relationship with his world is a supreme value, permitting no possible recourse to anything that might transcend him. Is this not precisely what is understood by atheism? But did Vatican II not defend just that? *Dignitatis humanae personae* is the title (and first words) of the *Declaratio* on Religious Freedom (which quotes at the very outset John XXIII's *Pacem in terris*).

The experience of pluralism, in the air almost everywhere today, was not foreign to the atmosphere of the Council. Pluralism has, so to speak, undermined the hitherto unshakable confidence in the absolute character of one's own convictions. It is not agnosticism to discover the relativity of our ideas, our formulations, even our beliefs. So we come to put confidence in the other, not only regarding his good faith but also regarding the truth—partial, limited, unilateral, or what you will, but truth after all—of his viewpoint. The other thus becomes a source of knowledge—and not merely an object of knowledge—that consequently cannot be reduced to my judgment.

With reference to our particular point, the philosophical structure underpinning the Council's reasoning comes down to the following: "The human person has a right to religious freedom: Now Man is not infallible, he can make mistakes: Consequently religious freedom must also consider the fact that the person may objectively be in error. All the same, he has a right to religious freedom, for this freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the human person. (*Jus ad libertatem religiosam esse fundatum in ipsa dignitate personae humanae* [The right to religious freedom is grounded in the very dignity of the human person].) This is to say that human freedom has a certain *ontonomy* vis-à-vis the adherence to or nonadherence to objective truth. We have no right to encroach upon freedom, for it is this freedom in which the dignity of the person is grounded. What has supreme value, what constitutes the dignity of Man, is his freedom, that is, the fact that he is capable of acting freely. If we rob Man of this we degrade him to a subhuman condition. Now, the essential claim of all religions is to help Man acquire (or recover) his full dignity, which is another term for salvation, libera-

tion, fullness, final goal, and the like. In other words, any religious act tends ultimately to let Man acquire his dignity, his salvation or liberation. Hence if an act is not free it cannot be religious. Here we come back to our thesis: To recognize the fact of religious freedom leads to the affirmation that the fundamental act of religion is the free act, and that the free act is the religious act par excellence. Thus the freedom of religion leads us to religion as freedom.

To sum up the transmythicization that has taken place regarding freedom and human dignity, we could quote the well-known Pauline saying: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom," but instead of reading it as only saying that the church, being where the Spirit dwells, is the place of freedom, we read it as also saying, "Where there is freedom, there is the Spirit of the Lord: The kingdom of freedom is built by the Spirit of the Lord. The church, by definition, is the place of freedom. Freedom *is* the Spirit of the Lord. The ecclesiastical calling, the vocation, the *congregatio* that constitutes the church, is a call to freedom: επ ελευqεριἀ eklhqhτε (*ep' eleutheria eklēthēte*).

Religion as Freedom[9]

ου δε το πνευμα κυριον, ελευθερια
Ubi autem Spiritus Domini, ibi libertas.[10]

It seems that the antinomy between religion and freedom appears the moment we begin to reflect on the problem. In a sense, freedom stands in antinomy with everything else, since liberty, once put on the level of the norm, is the *anti-nomos* par excellence. Dialectically speaking, freedom and law are certainly "antinomic"; but what we are looking for is a nondialectical relation between freedom and *nomos*, *ṛta*, *ordo*.

Whatever this may be, from the traditional point of view it is necessary to uphold the exclusively functional value of freedom; everything depends on how we use it; we cannot "substantialize" freedom and convert it into a good "thing." To canonize freedom above everything else would amount to libertinism, anarchy, the fiercest individualism, and in the final analysis, to the most radical solipsism—each Man his own king, a law unto himself. So we compromise, we limit exterior personal freedom by respect for the freedom of others, we trim the individual's freedom to the needs of society, and so forth. Now, to institutionalize freedom spells its destruction, independently of possible abuses on the part of authority (which still has a brake when it "comes from God," but turns into tyranny when it becomes autonomous). To want to instrumentalize freedom is a contradiction in terms. The impasse is real: You cannot leave freedom "free" if you want to safeguard order and religion. Man can live only in a state of conditioned freedom. Freedom is at the most free will, and that is all. Man's life on earth is on parole. We cannot elaborate here an analysis of the assumptions on which such a vision is based, or suggest the principles for a new vision of Man and reality. Suffice it to say that the traditional view is coherent: If Man is regarded as a substance, and substance as static being with no possible dynamism other than accidental change, and if being is considered as a given at its beginning and not at its end; if, further, time is an accident and ideas have a so-called divine immutability, and so on, then freedom is a mere psychological feature of the human being—which will sooner or later open the door to an extreme Skinnerian interpretation. I am not suggesting that the traditional notion is radically false.

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[9] Cf. R. Panikkar, "Freiheit und Gewissen," *Neues Abendland* (München, 1955), 1:25–32, for the theological basis of this second part.

[10] 2 Cor 3:17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

I am simply saying that as it presents itself to the contemporary spiritual situation it appears unsatisfactory. Rightly or wrongly a new myth seems to emerge and our intention has been one of trying to understand this transmythicization as far as possible.

Let us confine ourselves to this particular but central aspect of the relation between freedom and religion. If religion is fundamentally the link, the string, or rather the rein that somewhat bridles the wild animal that is Man, leading him to a goal, which he somehow seems to want and to shun, then freedom can only be the result of acknowledging that the prescribed way is the right path and that within it he may run "freely." The way is somewhat fixed and determined.

Now, perhaps religion is not only this. A very traditional Christian concept may help us here.

Metanoia is the constant challenge of faith to every epoch, in every culture and religion, and so also to contemporary Christianity. Now, this constant change of mind, this ongoing or rather "in-going" conversion, seems to indicate that the transformation faith requires of us is not to make freedom a religion (at which tradition would be justifiably outraged) but to discover the very nature of religion in real freedom. We shall try to explicate this.

It is certainly necessary to deepen the notion of freedom, but we must also rethink the concept of religion. This is not a matter of making freedom into a new form of religion, with its laws, duties, rites, and so on, but of recognizing that *what* was formerly represented by Law, Worship, Duty, and so on, and to which the name "religion" has been given, has freedom at its core or as its soul. I am not proposing a change of name; I propose simply a radical *metanoia* of religion itself, or rather, a *metanoia* of human religiousness, a metamorphosis of Man's deepest dimension, which until now has been called the "religious dimension."

We can only give a few insights into the problem. I shall try to describe first what *religion* represents, then what *freedom* means for contemporary Man, and finally a *Christian* hermeneutic about this question.

Religion, Way to Salvation, Means of Liberation

While the substantive definitions of religion stress the dependence, obligation, creatureliness, duty, contingency, and so on of a being insufficient unto itself, it seems to me that the following existential definition of religion may be able to assume the numerous descriptions already given and also include the new problematic: *Religion means way to salvation*, or indeed, *religion claims to be a way of liberation.* I call this definition existential because it refers to religion as an existential reality—*orthopraxis*—without seeking to fix an essential boundary for the contents of the concepts employed.

I must stress once and for all that this is an attempt to use a language that should be valid, as far as possible, for a wide range of religious and philosophic persuasions. We are consequently not concerned with settling the question whether a certain notion of the way or ways is in fact a "means" effectively conducive to salvation or not. Nor is there any question here of deciding whether salvation, as Man's perfection, can be reached by one way rather than another. By *way* I understand whatever means—action, mind, love, will, and so on—Man must employ, discover, believe, initiate, put into practice, and so on, in order to attain his salvation, destiny, end, goal. We can as well interpret this salvation from the most varied perspectives: from perfect union with God to mere survival in society, in an otherworldly heaven, individual annihilation, death, the absurd, or whatever. Intercultural, interphilosophical, and above all interreligious dialogue must know how to handle words and reach that which probably does not exist without concepts, but is not exhausted by them either.

We must say that the same goes for the word "religion." This word is a particular expression of a much larger and deeper reality; the word "religion" stems from a rather circumscribed order of thinking, valid only in a certain civilization. We know very well it is not found with its current sense in either the Bible or classical Latinity, nor can we find a strict translation for it in the other religious traditions of mankind. For this reason, to avoid terminological argument, I shall consider as religion not only what circulates under this label, but everything that claims to perform the function that religion *strictu sensu* is said to perform. In this broader meaning, any ensemble of means that claim to convey Man to his life's goal, however this goal might be conceived, can be considered religion.

For the last few centuries it has become habit to accord the word "religion" a very specialized meaning. Some have even wanted to exclude Buddhism from this definition since it does not recognize a supreme and personal God. On the other hand, religion had almost been identified with its conceptual expression, which was called "orthodox doctrine." The word also came to mean a particular virtue alongside other more or less important virtues. It was not easy, nor is it today, to recognize the fundamentally religious character of communism, humanism, and even secularism, since these movements do not fit the artificially restricted definition of religion. This would also explain the repugnance these same ideologies, or whatever you call them, feel toward considering themselves religions—so thoroughly has religion been reduced to certain notions of the way to salvation. For this very reason the proposal has lately been made to abandon the use of the word "religion" altogether; nevertheless, I believe that for want of a better word and also to underscore the basic continuity between what was once called religion and today's new forms of religiousness, we may still employ the same word, having broadened and deepened it along the lines just indicated.

It is not for us now in this context to judge the degree of truth or the moral value of any human attitude toward Man's ultimate problematic. We may question the value or the truth of contemporary modes of religiousness, call them aberrations, substitutes, or even false religions, but our task does not consist now in judging these religions or so-called ideologies but in disengaging from them their functional claim to lead their *believers* to their goal.

It should be clear by now that the intention of this chapter is neither to defend nor to attack religion, but to understand that peculiar human dimension expressed by this word. Moreover, the religious act does not necessarily need to be good. By the same token that the religious act claims to lead to salvation, its contrary act—equally religious—will lead to failure, damnation. A really free act has this power: It may lead us to our fulfillment, but equally to our bankruptcy. Religion is a double-edged sword.

We should like only to say one thing and from it to suggest another: to say that Man's religious dimension is not indispensably bound to a predetermined concept of religion; and to suggest that the religious crisis of mankind today is not due to the disappearance of religion as a human dimension, but to the new reclamation of a sphere of the secular that in the last centuries of Western history seemed to have been removed from religion. Whether this should take place at the price of burying the sacred, or of discovering the sacredness of the secular, is again quite another question. But certainly separation of church and state should not be confused with divorce between religion and life.

This said, we can pursue our path by stating that Man's religious dimension is on the way to finding its most authentic expression in, precisely, freedom.

One may have a more or less well-defined notion of freedom, but in one way or another freedom is always deemed Man's goal. Religion is that which makes the fundamental claim to liberate Man. That to which one adheres in order to acquire what one considers Man's fundamental freedom is a religion. In the cultural constellation of today's world, freedom

remains the most deep-seated characteristic of salvation, however one envisions human perfection.

If religion has always promised to save Man, then what mankind today eagerly awaits is precisely freedom, liberation from the sufferings, fears, doubts, anxieties, and insecurities of life. Humanity today, especially in the West, feels imprisoned by its own inventions, enslaved by its own means of power. Technology frees Man from so many of his traditional and endemic nightmares that for the first time he can truly forge his own destiny in a spectrum of possibilities unsuspected just a century ago. But he finds himself trapped in his own snare. The freedom to which he aspires is a political freedom as well as an economic and social freedom, but it is above all a personal, even individual, freedom. When you attend vast human gatherings—religious in the broadest sense of the word—you feel a sort of wind, a liberating breath, pass through the head and heart of the crowd, but you also realize that these salutary effects are only transient, because after the liturgical catharsis we relapse into everyday life, which clamps us like a vice and seems to let slip away that cup of liberation for which we ever thirst, and which modern Man seldom finds in the mere repetition of the past.

Man today thirsts for deliverance, that he would be free from everything, from every limitation, and for this reason from all religion as well, in the sense that the "bond" of "religion" seems to him incompatible with the freedom to which he aspires. The religious act par excellence is seen and lived in the act of liberation—from everything, even from religion and from oneself—and we may recall Meister Eckhart's injunction to get rid of God for God's sake. All prophetic activity is basically the effort—always a failure—to rid oneself of religion in the name of religion. "If you see the Buddha, kill him," as the great Mahāyāna sages and mystics would say—with no need to quote Zen.

This then would be the first part of our thesis: The goal of Man is liberation, this being nothing other than deliverance from every constraint, from all limitation, for any limit stands like a wall, blocking us, preventing our flowering. If religion claims to save Man, it can do so only by putting him on the path to realizing his destiny. We may recall the myth of Śunaḥśepa as the story of deconditioning Man.

To sum up: The act of ontically exercising freedom is the religious act by which Man is saved (or doomed). The religious act is the act of freedom. The fact of becoming alive to the freedom of religion, that is to say, the fact of having recognized that the freedom of the religious act is this act's primordial element (in such a way that if we were not free we could not call it religious), this fact leads us to define religion as freedom, and freedom as the fundamental religious category. Only thus do we circumvent the objections raised by those who even lately oppose religious freedom in the name of religion.

Religion as the Free Act of Liberation

Man wants to be free. Religion wants to free Man. Present-day thought is deeply convinced that the way leading to freedom must itself be a free way, that is, a way freely chosen or accepted. It is a road that opens out before the traveler, but that at the same time springs up from its own depths—a road that creates itself in the traveling. In traditional terms we could say that religion must be a free act so that Man may come into the entirety of his freedom.

An act that is not itself free cannot liberate. But what is a free act? When does a person act freely? We can answer from a double perspective: He is free who *does* what he wills, or else *wills* what he does. In the first case he is given, in the second the action, but in both cases there is a certain harmony, even adequation, between the intimate depths of being and

its expressions and manifestations. In this sense, freedom is truth. Only a free being can be true, for only then will it express what it is. For this reason, there is in any desire for freedom always an impetus to truth.

All the same, there is a vital and characteristic circle in freedom: If I do what I will I am free, but my willingness could always be predetermined, unfree; if, on the other hand, I really *will* what I do, my psychological freedom is guaranteed, since I express what I believe in my action. But what assures me that my actions are not imposed on me, more or less unconsciously, by external circumstance? Do we not make virtue of necessity?

How can we jump out of this circle? (If I do what I will, is it not because I will what I do and vice versa?) If freedom is only internal (wanting to do what I do), it can very easily turn into passive acceptance of what is imposed from outside. If it is but to carry out external action (to do what I will), then apart from possible conflicts with the freedom of others (which will oblige me to limit my own), it can from this side turn into individualistic, anarchical caprice, which is at bottom only a new form of the slavery imposed by action. Only a synergy of these two modes of freedom can bring about authentic human freedom.

The well-known distinction between *freedom-from* and *freedom-to* (which could moreover express the characteristic modes of Eastern and Western spirituality, respectively) may serve as well to express the two faces of freedom we have just mentioned. *Freedom-to do* what I will (West) would thus be counterbalanced by *freedom-from willing* what I do (East).

Now, is Man not *free to free* himself *from* everything that opposes his salvation, his liberation? This is the crux. Most religions would qualify this freedom. They claim precisely to lead Man to his freedom. Grace could be what gives Man this *freedom-to* so that by it he may *free* himself from every obstacle to realizing his salvation; however, very often grace—by definition, absolutely gratuitous—is in fact dependent upon regulations and institutions that seem to interpose themselves between personal freedom and the liberation of Man. We touch here on a complex of well-known and delicate problems—on human nature, sin, grace, and free will—that we do not wish to pursue.

I repeat: It is not a matter of considering freedom a superior form of religion, or as religion and nothing more, but exactly the contrary; that is, to see that the essence of the religious act consists precisely in the realization of freedom.

The first attitude, the opinion that freedom is the true religion, represents a traditional idea in most religions. But here we cannot escape one of two difficulties: Either we institutionalize freedom in order to make it a religion in the traditional sense, or we fall into libertinism. One could write a whole history of religions centered on the constant tension, creative or destructive, between these two tendencies: On one side we find a "subjugated" freedom in the bosom of an institution accepted as "mother," refuge, liberator, or what have you, freedom as a recompense for the docile and obedient; and on the other side, unbridled anarchy, since a religion that seeks to be pure freedom should abjure not only every constraint but every norm and directive as well. The tension becomes tragic when the structures do not allow themselves to be overstepped, when rebellion and revolt lead to the same impasses as docility and submission. What makes the lives of certain saints so exciting is not their way of surmounting the conflict—which indeed they do not resolve—but their manner of sustaining defeat by projecting onto a true eschatology, which is not an evasion, the solution that will be possible precisely after their failure. Sanctity is in fact the harmony between "impossibilities." If by night all cats are gray, in the future every aporia will have a loophole. Tragedy only rears its head when you kill time, when you can neither wait nor hope.

What we are now analyzing is precisely the possibility of a new alternative; this constitutes the novelty of our era and what I have called a change of myth. I have already formulated

our principle: The essence of the religious act, that which we find in the heart of what we call religion, is precisely freedom.

We shall now pursue a certain sequence in the ascent of our thinking.

1. First, an act that is not free cannot be called a religious act. A forced act would have no religious value. The more freely an act is performed, the more human and religious value it has.

2. Second; the religious act is a free act—free in the one who performs it, and free in its effects. Religion is distinguished from its counterfeit, magic, by the fact that freedom is essential to the religious act. Worship is distinguished from ritualism by the fact that the former may fall short, for it always runs a risk: it is ever a new act, a (re)creation.

We could try to clarify all this with a little help from the history of classical religions. A very brief résumé would draw, it seems to me, the following picture. Religion is the set of means used by Man to reach, or make, his salvation (whether the means are given by the divine or not). Now, what saves is by definition *sacrifice*, that is, participation in the cosmic and primordial act through which the world is "re-made," comes to its final destination, remakes in inverse the act that gave birth to the universe, and so forth. Participation in this sacrifice may take innumerable forms, ranging from rites valid in themselves, which consequently save almost physically or automatically, to an interiorization of these rites by thought or intention; there is as well a spectrum of interpretations from individual morality to the realm of social or even political action. Every religion demands an *orthopraxis* in which Man collaborates in this process. In every case we find a human act freely performed. Now, participation in the saving act, performance of the sacrifice, assimilation of the sacramental structure, worship, or rite that Man believes he must accomplish to reach or approach salvation has until today been dominated, in general, by the authority of the objective order, by the power of the divine factor, by the efficacy of the rites, the knowledge of the party, the might of nature, the resources of science, and so on. In other words, the essence of the religious act was seen as submission and obedience, even adoration, the acknowledgment of human dependence and divine power, the acceptance of creatureliness and of the human condition and similar attitudes, which could perhaps be summed up in the word "fidelity." Religion furnished the "objective" means of salvation, and the person's duty was to lay hold of them, assimilate them, make them his own. Of course with all this, nobody claimed to encroach upon freedom. This freedom was said to be the acceptance, recognition, and discovery of the real and existential situation. It was the necessary condition for attaining, in a way befitting the human being and yet meritorious, the salvation that grace presented to us.

This procedure can be expressed in the most divergent ways, following one or another spirituality or religion, but with very few exceptions we would finally come to what we are in the midst of setting forth, that is, the concept of salvation as a "favor" from God, a "gift" of the party, a "gratuitous" discovery, an unmerited intuition, a predestination freely accepted, a "package deal," and so forth. Even traditions like the Buddhist, which strongly stresses Man's self-redemptive character, do not fail to insist not only that it is the Buddha who has brought us the message of deliverance, but also that we must in some way or other undergo the experience of the Enlightened One in order to be saved. In short, one *ought*, even though freely, to accept, adhere, follow, obey, recognize. . . .

In one way or another, although people have held very different notions of freedom, the religious act has always been considered a free act, free because fully human.

3. Our third point is simply that the contemporary myth is different. It is not only that people profess themselves no longer satisfied with Latin, literary Arabic, Pali, or Sanskrit, because they want to understand; nor is it merely a question of a somewhat pressured adaptation to procure more meaningful, and so truer, rituals. It is not enough to discover that we

want to be aware of, and consciously collaborate in, the religious act. To be sure, this is most traditional, but the difference lies in the fact that this saving free act is no longer seen either in or necessarily connected with the rites, doctrines, or actions of established religious norms. A Catholic may not feel he is betraying his faith by not going to Sunday Mass; a Protestant may find no betrayal of his Christian commitment by indulging in extramarital sexual life; a Muslim may not feel any longer guilty if he does not follow the Qur'anic eating and drinking regulations; a Hindu may drop all observations and still consider himself a good Hindu, and so on and so on. Still, in traditional terminology, it is the new sacrifice (identified with the primordial sacrifice), which Man himself freely makes because he feels it surge up from inside his very being. That gives him the requisite awareness of collaborating and participating in the act by which he comes to the fulfillment of his being.

Summarizing humanity's present situation in a single phrase, I would call it a *crisis of the intermediary*. Whether this intermediary is named king, concept, priest, sacrament, institution, even prayer or interpretation, there is nonetheless in every case a desire for immediacy, for direct experience. People have lost confidence in the intermediary. People are tired of anything interposing itself between the free, spontaneous act of the person and the end of that act. They have lost confidence not only in the faith of others (theologians, doctors, parents, saints, sages, scientists, or church) but in the knowledge of elites, in the "gifts" of authority exercised in whatever domain, in anything they do not personally see or experience. They want the thing, the reality, the experience, the intuition; yesterday's hierarchical order has collapsed. Supermarkets where the shopper can choose directly, universal suffrage by which you believe you have a direct participation, the royal priesthood of all believers, and so on, are so many examples of this new situation, but its roots should be sought in the subsoil of Man himself, who more or less suddenly and deeply finds himself the maker of his own destiny, his own architect; in a word, free—with the terrifying awareness that freedom is no longer a sort of refuge or protection, but a freedom that leaves us totally exposed, a freedom that is itself free, so to speak, not tied to an established or preestablished order. Perhaps this will also explain why many people today, foreseeing or even tasting this freedom, have preferred the comfortable captivity of Egypt, offered these days by technology, anonymity, and so on, to the perils of an authentic freedom.

This crisis of the intermediary should not be confused with the need for a *mediator*. A mediator is not a foreign or external agent. A mediator shares in both of the natures it mediates, and so is involved in what we may still experience as a schism. A mediator is the medium, which is not just betwixt and between but the center that encompasses all sides without dominating any of them. A seed can be the mediator of roots and stems, a kernel of core and husk, a child of father and mother, a Christ of Man and God. An intermediary is a broker, a go-between, an independent agency, a "disinterested party." At most the intermediary is an impartial instrument or a catalyst, a leverage, but is not an involved participant.

It is this intermediary, on all levels, that is today in crisis.

This is most visible in the rupture of the rapport between means and ends that any sociological analysis of the state of contemporary Western society would bring to light. The younger generation revolts at considering itself a means—a transitional period—to the end of adulthood; education as a means to subsequent ends has long been untenable; and asceticism as a means to an end is also disappearing. People want the now and have no patience to wait for a future in which they no longer hope. Equally, for our generation, either a vertical paradise in an "other" world, or a horizontal "utopian" future, seems almost laughable in the face of our double disappointment—by a promised heaven that does not prevent Man's inhumanity to Man, and by a perfect or classless society that never comes.

I have just sketched in sociological terms what happens in the depths of personal awareness to most people once they awaken to the contemporary problematic. The crisis is profound and acute: Religion, formerly the bond of human solidarity, of individual and collective security—religion, once indissolubly linked with tradition—has become personal in a sense that far outgrows, say, nineteenth-century individualism in Europe. It is not now a question of withdrawing into the individual (in understandable reaction to a certain prior alienation), but of taking upon oneself the totality of responses and responsibilities normally expected from religion.

Passing now from the anecdotal to the categorical, we may reverse the classical proposition that says that the religious act must be a free act, by emphasizing that *the free act is the religious act par excellence*. So it is not enough to say that an act that is free cannot be a religious act, because the religious act is basically free; but we must add that the religiousness of the act, so to speak, comes from its freedom. Only a free act can be a religious act, precisely because what constitutes the essence of the religious act is the freedom of that act. The religious act is that which puts Man on the road to his salvation; it is the saving act. And by the same token, we repeat, it is the religious act that also entails the possibility of failure. Now, Man cannot consider himself saved while he is still subject to limitations, while he is bound by entanglements that come to him from outside or from inside. If Man is able to perform a free act, an act by which he expresses, shows, and makes himself, he is saved, or at least he has performed an act that carries him toward his liberation, salvation, or fulfillment. And this is the essence of the free act.

Let us now try to proceed a little further, open to the novelty of the new myth, without totally breaking continuity with the old: a real study in transmythicization.

Religion as Creative Freedom

We may approach this question from a double perspective, that of the past or that of the future, or to take it further, from a perspective static on the one hand and dynamic on the other. These two points of view do not coincide completely, but here we may consider them together.

From one side, then, we may envision Man's liberation as the simple recovery of a threatened freedom, the reconquest of a lost paradise, the rediscovery of a vanished reality. In this case everything is reduced to rediscovering Man's true nature, reverting to the point of departure, regaining the primitive, even primordial state, returning to God as the source of all there is. God is immutable for this notion: It is not for God to return to the past, nor is it really for Man either; but as psychological orientation Man must return to the past to "re-source" himself, to reach back to his origin, which from God's viewpoint is atemporal. Man's task is to recover the undistorted image, to polish the immaculate mirror, to reflect the true image, and so on.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and many other religions can furnish us several examples of spiritualities founded on this presupposition. To recognize reality amounts to a true birth into that reality; to dispel ignorance means salvation, for Man's true being is always there, has always been there, even if unnoticed. All gnosis, and a certain contemplation, is founded on this principle that reality is already there. Only knowledge, in this case, can truly save. Every discovery presupposes that reality is merely covered, every revelation that the Savior is only veiled, every epiphany or salvific theophany that God is but hidden (unless by a twist characteristic of our time you assert the fact of discovering, revealing, etc., to be what *makes* reality). At bottom this is the religion of *Homo sapiens*. He is free who can think, the Stoics said.

The other perspective situates salvation ontologically in the future. We say ontologically in order to make it clear that this is a future that no discovery can attain because it has yet to be traversed, arrived at, created. There is little room here for the priest who unveils mystery or keeps the treasure of the faith. There is place here for the prophet who foresees the future and guides into it. Liberation here is not simply discovering a latent situation already extant and real, or recovering a lost (paradisiacal) condition; on the contrary, it is the creation of a new reality, the invention of a situation that did not before exist. This is the religion of *Homo faber*. He is free who knows how to act, we might say here.

It is clear, then, that this liberation that so to speak unleashes the unsuspected potentialities of the person is more than a simple purification, and much more than cleaning the dirty lenses that keep us from seeing Man's true nature. From this perspective, Man would not yet possess his true nature, whatever we call it, and it would be precisely through his freedom that he creates it. So a *freedom to* create his destiny is needed besides a *freedom from* all the obstacles existing on the way.

Let us now try to describe that dimension of religion that is central in the experience of contemporary Man—in brief: the experience of freedom and the experience of creativity; or, better said: the belief that Man can make himself and fashion the world. Could this not be called a λειτουργια (*leitourgia*)? And significantly enough the Indo-European root for freedom (ελευθερια) means also belonging to the people (*leudh-ero-s* [ελευ]; cf. Latin *liber-tas* and German *Leute*.

From an Anthropological Viewpoint

Our century has had massive experience of the vital need for tolerance. Without tolerance in every domain, human individuals and groups are irremediably doomed to disappear. In the religious sphere the phenomenon is parallel: We feel driven to concede a freedom of religion in order to coexist. In one way or another this leads us to become more sensitive to the fact that not only does freedom have an important role in human relations, but that it is essential to every religion, since without freedom these religions cannot exist. Even more, we are led to recognize that freedom is fundamental to religion per se, since the exercise of freedom is preeminently a religious act.

This freedom, to which Man has forever aspired, but which in our day has become, under a thousand headings, the explicit ideal of almost every movement, means far more than instinctive spontaneity, far more than political, black, women's, sexual, educational, younger generations,' or younger people's, liberation and the like. It means rather a freedom of the whole being, an ontological spontaneity, we might say. Man is free not when he does what he wills or wills what he does, but when his whole being is free, liberated—indeed when it *is* freedom.

But when is being free? What is it to be freedom? To answer and even to formulate this pivotal question we must choose some philosophy or other, if only as a frame of reference. What follows must be understood in this sense. Being is truly free as being when all its being is freedom. The free being is not someone who has one part, one limb free, so to speak (the will, for example), but one who has the totality of his being free, who is freedom.

Now, being freedom, being free, and the freedom of being as being (three expressions we treat here as synonyms) can come about only if being is not determined by anything exterior or foreign to it. In this sense only a totally independent being could be fully free, but the conscious affirmation of independence implies an affirmation of self-identity, and this, in a second moment, would already mean the weakening of this total freedom, for that

being would no longer be fully self-determinate but dependent upon a prior moment. The identical image is not free to be different from its source. Strictly speaking, only an eternal being, above and outside time, can be free in the fullest sense. Man's historical character, his temporality, is a burden that renders complete freedom impossible. Man's present state is already conditioned by his own past. The historical being Man is can attain freedom only when his past, as it emerges in his present, is, so to speak, forgiven, destroyed, transformed, burnt, to give way to a new future, not conditioned by any prior circumstance. Man is free insofar as he destroys his *karma*, we might say, insofar as he launches himself into his future without the millstone of his past. Under this light one may perhaps understand the Vedic conception of human existence as the absolving of all *ṛs* or "debts" Man has with reality, the insistence of the Buddha for the *anātmavāda*, that is, the ever-momentary nature of our existence because there is no *ātman* that we have to drag along in our temporal existence, and the Christian emphasis on forgiveness, that is, of being liberated from the negative factor of creatureliness in order to lead an authentic or divinized life.

The free act par excellence is the unconditioned action, which is to say that only the creative act is perfectly free. Every act, to the extent it is free, is creative; if it does not create it is not free but merely reshuffles given conditions. An action is free insofar as it is performed without constraint of any kind, without extrinsic determination. Now Man as artist or technician has all the initiative that his intelligence or his mastery over nature gives him, but he is always conditioned by the limits to his knowledge, and by conditions imposed by the materials he uses.

There is a domain where Man has a very special autonomy: himself. Man is more than an artisan who constructs himself as he fashions nature: He is his own artist, and this precisely when he acts freely, when he forges his own destiny. Human creativity is to produce the future, not from mere previous conditions, but with a spontaneity that neither follows a path mapped out in advance nor simply discovers a hidden but already existing road. This production of the future is a true creation inasmuch as it is not conditioned by the past or influenced by anything prior. Non-free beings have no future, they have only a fate. Man, as a free being, is a being with a future: His being shall be; he has a "future tense," he can attain being.

Human freedom is not only, or basically, the capacity to make decisions about things, events, or people. Real freedom takes root in the core of Man, which possesses this power to become himself, in religious terms, to save himself. The prerogative of human freedom is not limited to the choice between given possibilities; it is not the power, either, to do or to make just anything, but to make oneself, to make oneself *oneself*. In theological terms we may say, the salvation to which Man aspires is not an extrinsic gift, something super-erogatory, but a personal conquest—to realize oneself, to achieve one's being. To put it in Christian terms: Christ does not save by a heteronomic act, offering an alien salvation foreign to Man, but by becoming flesh and blood so that he may be eaten, assimilated, and by this divine metabolism transform Man also into Son of God. In the Christian conception, salvation comes neither by heteroredemption (through an other) [monotheism] nor through autoredemption (by oneself) [Pelagianism], Christ being at once truly Man and truly God, an authentic Mediator. Christian salvation comes neither as from an outside power, nor as from an inside power, but as from an in-spiration (of– and in–the entire Trinity), which links these two extremes together.

Or in Buddhist terms: Buddha does not confer direct illumination to anyone, offering an objective method to overcome *duḥkha*, but he simply points out the way, leaving to the concrete person the effort and diligence to work out one's salvation. *Nirvāṇa* does not come from "above" or as a result of an innerworldly causality. *Nirvāṇa* is so free and unconditioned

that the very desire for "the other shore" destroys it. The purity of being that is required cleanses us from all creatureliness.

The free human act is the one by which Man wills what he does and does what he wills. Now, this identification can be actualized only in ourselves; this constitutes the vital circle to which we have alluded. It is when Man makes himself that he is free, and at the same time he frees himself (from all that is not him, from all inauthenticity).

To make oneself means to mold one's future, to create what did not exist before; otherwise it would not be a real future. The paradigm of artistic creation does not apply here, and consequently the categories of substance and accident and the theory of the four causes are also inappropriate. It is not a question of rearranging givens from my past into a more or less satisfying future; rather it is to live an authentically human life, and so to grow in my being human. Now, human growth, different from any other growth, is much more than developing the power latent in the seed, and goes well beyond any progressive linear continuation of preliminary data. Human growth is free. Not only can it direct or develop itself in one or another direction, choosing among several possibilities, but it can flower in forms not given in advance, unsuspected: a true creation toward a state that does not exist, a growth in being, which is more than simply conservation or evolution—this is what a new creation means. We may note in passing that the notion of pre-given possibilities presupposes a static vision of the universe, where reality is at least potentially already there. From the perspective we are indicating the future is future precisely because it *is* not. The potentiality of being is in this case a sheer mental abstraction. The true future of being does not stem from a final cause that contrives it.

All this does not block the possibility of interpreting liberation via the grace of God, because this grace, precisely because it is divine, cannot be considered merely as an external boost of some sort, but a divine—transcendent as well as immanent—force that transforms human nature without doing it violence, and so makes it possible for Man to attain the fullness of his being. Our analysis makes sense given either hypothesis, that of self-liberation and that of salvation through divine grace. In other words, that for this free act one needs the grace of Christ, or the preaching of the Buddha, the teaching of Scripture, the task entrusted by the party, the inspiration of truth or science, the mandate of history or of whatever prophet, does not contradict what we have just said. As long as one has not personally appropriated the message, gift, grace, or task that conveys salvation, as long as Man does not realize by himself the preeminently free act, he will gain none of the benefits religion might furnish him.

The moral, theological, and ecumenical consequences of this vision seem to me important; I shall not develop them here, but simply mention one anthropological consequence. Freedom, in the sense we have just described, means thus Man's creativity. The human being is that being that creates its own future. The human future does not exist; the models we entertain of it belong at most to epistemology, never to ontology. Human life on earth, inasmuch as it pursues its goal and does not relapse into tellurism, is a true creation, an expansion that has no other law but the freedom of Man, who as he gradually advances creates his own future, his own situation, his being. Freedom is human creativity. Man is free insofar as he creates, or better, to the extent that he creates himself.

It is not for me here to show how God is not necessarily denied in all we have said, although the conception of God emerges modified, and purified as well, it seems to me.

Not only is the kingdom of God the kingdom of freedom, but God himself is absolute Freedom. At heart, the most imperfect way Man can conceive the infinite is through his experience of freedom. By freedom we realize what it means to have no limits, no barriers, no constraints; we experience the non-finite, the infinite. The rupture of every bond: that is

freedom. But the limitation of being finite is the bond that preeminently constitutes creatureliness. God is the absence of every limit, and Man is called to rejoin him by conquering his freedom, by stepping up from his creatureliness. Man arrived, achieved, perfect, *will have been* a creature (and this fact remains). He no longer *will be* one: he simply *is*.

It seems superfluous to me, but it may help to dispel a possible misunderstanding, to underscore that the freedom we are speaking of here has nothing to do with its caricature or its abuse. Liberty is not libertinism; the breaking of all *bonds* does not mean the smashing of our constitutive structures. Overcoming limits does not mean giving free rein to passions, ambitions, and ego-centered whims. Freedom does not mean a denial of our itinerant condition or contingent being, blurring all frontiers and overflooding all boundaries. All this does not set us free, but enslaves us to ever-greater powers—τα στοιχεια του κοσ μου (*ta stoicheia tou kosmou*), St. Paul called them.

From a Cosmological Viewpoint

To further describe this transmythicization we could perhaps say that the function exercised by the transcendent God of so many religions is now fulfilled in the world's heart by the immanent divinity in secular religiousness. All too often the general concept of divine immanence was a sort of inverse transcendence and not a true immanence in things. The secular religiousness of our day, however, is in the midst of realizing the genuine experience of divine immanence. People devote themselves to the service of the earth, humankind, culture, society, science, and even technology with the same *pathos*, the same seriousness, with which they formerly consecrated themselves to the service of God. The secular, which was for some time relegated to the profane, has again become sacred. Man, having eliminated otherworldly attitudes as outmoded religiousness, has projected into the secular most all of the religious values of the sacred. The Absolute, which for a time took refuge outside the universe, has reentered the world—even the Gods are coming back (if they ever deserted the world).

In a certain traditional notion Man took refuge in the transcendent God to attain salvation, and in a certain sense abandoned the world. The spirituality of the immanent divinity makes modern Man fling himself into the arms of the World as into an absolute, as the immanent God he has discovered. Human salvation is seen as a liberation not of Man alone, but of the whole cosmos, as a liberation of the forces of nature, as freedom for the World as well. The World is no longer an enemy to vanquish, exploit, or crush; neither is it any longer an "other" to love—it is part of the whole to be freed from physical necessity by the sacerdotal act of its human liberator. We hasten to add that a purely transcendent God is as nonexistent as an exclusively immanent God, or, if we prefer, that an absolute, an ideal (whatever name we give it) located either outside the World or inside it cannot have the reality of this cosmotheandric mystery that many of the traditional religions still readily call God. But all this goes beyond the limits of these pages.[11]

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[11] "Almost all living things act to free themselves from harmful contact," B. F. Skinner begins his chapter on freedom in his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Knopf, 1972), and ends the chapter writing that "Man's struggle for freedom is not due to a will to be free, but to certain behavioral processes characteristic of the human organism, the chief effect of which is the avoidance of or escape from so-called 'aversive' features of the environment." Cf. R. Panikkar, "*Colligite Fragmenta:* For an Integration of Reality," in *From Alienation to At-One-Ness*, Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University, ed. P. A. Eigo and S. E. Fittipaldi (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1977), 19–132. Now in Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

The experience of contemporary Man finding himself, and moreover believing himself, not master of the universe, but in a certain sense its builder, its responsible partner, is a fundamental religious experience. Man has suddenly felt himself bound to the earth, joined with it in a communal destiny, playing his part in a cosmic whole of which he is the awareness. Human religiousness cannot henceforward dissociate itself from the earth, this earth of Men, and every effort toward salvation now calls for a genuine integration with all universe.

Doubtless an optimistic vision of reality, this, but not idealized to the point of eliminating sin, error, fall, failure. Man makes himself when he acts freely, but he can run aground in this act, he can choose, he can take flight at his responsibility, fall back on the past, take refuge in security, instead of hurling himself into the risk of living, the adventure of faith, the realization of freedom, into what religions of all times—but often outside time—have wanted to bring him: liberation, joy, the infinite, or in the language of most religions: God.

All this leads us to see religion as the dimension of Man in which his freedom dwells, or as the synergy of the ways leading Man to realize his own creative freedom. The religion of freedom, in this hermeneutic, is precisely that human act by which Man conquers his being, his freedom. This does not make established traditional religions obsolete. On the contrary, the call to freedom is a refreshing and purifying injunction. To be sure, it kills legalisms and servile attitudes and it makes the believing communities sharers in a new liberating myth, but it does not deny the need of religious structure.

A Christian Hermeneutic

The mutation in human consciousness alluded to in the beginning of this chapter finds a striking example in the unprecedented move of the Second Vatican Council. The already quoted document has recognized in the most explicit fashion the primacy of the freedom of the person over any other value whatsoever. Now, if the human being has the right, and also the duty, to follow his own conscience, to act always in accord with his personal freedom, this means that the Roman Church recognizes that the free human act bears the greatest possible human dignity, to which everything else must be subordinated.

In this, the Council both acknowledges that mutation and establishes continuity with the most Christian tradition. Few themes, in fact, have been more emphasized by Paul, and particularly by John, than the freedom Christ came to bring Man: liberating him from the Law, from sin, from himself, and so on, explicitly calling him to freedom. It is the Son who sets us free, John will repeat, putting these words on the very lips of Jesus.

In a time of ecumenism and encounter of religions as if by historical imperative, this new stage of awareness acquires a considerable importance. It is not Christianity as a religion but Christ as symbol that becomes central.

The message of Christ is a message of freedom; it carries the freedom requisite to perform the free act that saves. It is clear, moreover, that only an interior Christ (which does not deny a historical Christ identified with him) can make possible the realization of an act that is truly free, spontaneous, and fully human; otherwise it would just be a new imposition from outside. For this reason, the free act as such, and not the act adapted on the surface to Christian doctrine, is the real, religious, and Christian act. To carry out this free and saving act, there is no strict need of any "religion," let alone Christianity. Only the faith of the human person is required. We have here the foundation of true pluralism. What matters is freedom.

"Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" (τι δε και αφ εαυτων ου κρινετε το δικαιον—*ti de kai aph' eauton ou krinete to dikaion?*),[12] Christ once said. Christian freedom is human freedom and Christ the Liberator. Christ is the principle of freedom illumining every Man coming into this world; he came to tell us we must judge for ourselves, shoulder our responsibilities, bring our given talents to fruition, and learn to forgive. What is at stake in freedom is not a galactic circulation of dead stars, but a perpetual creation and re-creation; by our participation in the creative act of forgiving, we give life to ourselves and to others.

"All that does not proceed from faith is sin," St. Paul says.

In this the gospel is a good and joyful news, that it announces freedom, not an objective, dehumanized—not to say inhuman—freedom, but a concrete, real, existential freedom, to each Man's personal measure. A hermeneutic of the freedom of religion brings us to religious freedom and a hermeneutic of this, to religion as freedom.[13]

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By way of conclusion we may sum up our thesis in several statements:

The religious act has to be a free act—ultimately because it is a human act and Man is a free being (in the many senses freedom may be interpreted).

This implies that any routinely "religious" act is not truly religious if not freely performed—although there are several kinds of freedom.

The relation between religion and freedom is so intimate that it permits the inversion of the statement: Every truly free act is a religious act that relates us with the Ultimate (in whatever sense we may interpret "it").

This implies that religion is more than an objective set of doctrines, rituals, and customs claiming to deal with the ultimate goals of human life; it is also and mainly a set of freely accepted and recognized symbols in which one freely believes: It is the realm of the myth.

It amounts to closing the vital circle: The human right of "freedom of religion" appears as a tautology, for without such freedom there is no religion, no religious act.

But it is a qualified tautology, as all ultimate statements are bound to be, for they cannot have any instance beyond the very fact that they are ultimate; they have to show from within themselves that such is the case. In this sense the self-revelatory character of religion appears once more as belonging to its proper nature.

Appendix

The following references situate us in the perspective we have tried to follow. Our thesis fits into tradition by continuing it.

1. "Religionem imperare non possumus, quia nemo cogitur, ut credat invitus," Cassiodorus (*Variae*, II.27 [*apud* Mommsen's *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores ant.* XII.62] reporting the words of (his) king Theodoric the Ostrogoth (493–526) to the Jews of Genova: "We cannot command 'religion,' because nobody can be forced to believe against his will."

2. "Conscientia obligat non virtute propria sed virtute praecepti divini: non enim conscientia dictat aliquid esse faciendum hac ratione quod sibi videtur sed hac ratione quia a Deo praeceptum est" [Conscience binds not by its own power, but by power of the divine precept; for conscience tells us what is to be done, not because it sees it so, but because it is prescribed by God] (Thomas Aquinas, *In II Sent.*, d. 39, q. 3, a. 3 ad 3).

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[12] Lk 12:57.

[13] Cf. bibliographical appendix on religious freedom and tolerance.

3. "Quicumque autem ex amore aliquid facit, quasi ex seipso operatur, quia ex propria inclinatione movetur ad operandum" [Now whoever does a thing through love, does it of himself so to speak, because it is by his own inclination that he is moved to act] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.* II-II, q. 19, a. 4, c.

4. "Unde quod liberum arbitrium diversa eligere possit, servato ordine finis, hoc pertinet ad perfectionem libertatis eius: sed quod eligat aliquid, divertendo ab ordine finis, quod est peccare, hoc pertinet ad defectum libertatis. Unde maior libertas arbitrii est in angelis qui peccare non possunt, quam in nobis qui peccare possumus" [Hence it pertains to the perfection of its liberty, for free choice to be able to choose between different things, keeping the order of the end in view. But it pertains to the defect of liberty, for it to choose anything by turning away from the order of the end. And this is to sin. Hence there is a greater liberty of choice in the angels, who are not able to sin, than there is in ourselves, who are able to sin] (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, I, q. 62, a. 8 ad 3.; Cf. *etiam* II-II, q. 88, a. 4 ad I).)

5. "Utrum voluntas discordans a ratione errante sit mala" [Whether the will is evil when it is at variance with erring reason]. Answer: yes. "Utrum voluntas concordans rationi erranti, sit bona" [Whether the will is good when it abides by erring reason]. Answer: no, it may be evil (Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. theol.*, II, q. 19, aa. 5 and 6).

6. E "I duca a lui: Caron, non ti crucciare: *vuolsi cosi colà dove si puote ciò che si vuole*, e più non dimandare. Dante, *Inferno* III.94–96. ("Then said my guide: 'Charon, why wilt thou roar / And chafe in vain? *Thus it is willed where power / And will are one*; enough; ask thou no more'" (trans. D. L. Sayers). Cf. also *Inferno* V.23–24.

7. "La liberté consiste a faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui: ainsi l'exercise des droits naturels de chaque homme n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux membres de la société la jouissance de ces mêmes droits" [Freedom consists in being able to do all that does not harm others; thus, the exercising of the natural rights of every man has no bounds except the assurance that the other members of society can enjoy the same rights] (*Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du Citoyen de 1789*, art. 4).

8. "Si la liberté de pensée ou de conscience était absolue ou illimitée, il s'ensuivrait que la raison humaine serait independante dans sa pensée et dans ses jugements et, conséquemment, dans son existence aussi bien que dans son essence. Or cela répugne absolument, car la raison humaine est la faculté d'un esprit créé qui, précisément parce qu'il est créé, ne peut pas être sa propre loi" [If freedom of thought or conscience were absolute or unlimited, it would follow that human reason would be independent in its thought and in its judgments and, consequently, in its existence as well as in its essence. This is absolutely abominable, because human reason is the faculty of a created spirit which, precisely because it is created, cannot be its own law] (A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, and E. Amann, "Liberté," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* [Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1926], 691).

9. "La liberté est une catégorie spirituelle et religieuse et non pas naturaliste et métaphysique" [Liberty is a spiritual and religious category, not a naturalistic or metaphysical one] (N. Berdiaev, *Esprit et Liberté* [Paris: "Je sers," 1933], 137).

10. "Dieu ne peut vouloir que la liberté, parce qu'elle constitue son Idée, son dessein du monde. Il ne peut désirer que l'on accomplisse sa volonté formellement en s'y soumettant aveuglement, parce qu'il ne peut y avoir une volonté separée de l'idée de Dieu" [God can only will freedom because it is his idea and his plan for the world. He cannot desire that Man should carry out his will in a formal way with blind submission, because there cannot be a will separated from the idea of God] (Ibid., 167).

11. "La liberté est toujours un acte créateur" [Freedom is always a creative act] (L. Lavelle, *De l'acte* [Paris: Aubier, 1946], 184).

12. "Tout le problème de l'amour est de savoir comment une liberté peut devenir un objet pour une autre liberté . . . Alors, nous découvrons l'identité réelle de la liberté et de l'amour . . . L'amour est donc l'actualité de la liberté" [The whole problem of love is knowing how one freedom can become an object to another freedom . . . Thus we discover the real identity of freedom and love . . . Love, therefore, is the act of freedom] (ibid., 352–53).

13. "Nous sommes seuls, sans excuses. C'est ce que j'exprimerai en disant que l'homme est condamné à être libre" [We are alone, without excuse. That is what I would express saying that Man is condemned to be free] (J. P. Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* ([Paris: Nagel, 1946], 37).

14. "Objektiv besteht die Freiheit darin, dass den Christusgläubigen nicht eine Summe von Vorschriften bindet, sondern, dass die Liebe zu jenem Du, dem er von Wesen her zugeordnet ist, ihn zu seinem Tun führt. Subjektiv empfindet er die Freiheit darin, dass er tun darf, wonach sein von Gott verwandeltes Herz begehrt, nämlich lieben" [From an objective point of view, freedom consists in the fact that he who believes in Christ is not bound by a set of rules, but is guided in his action by his love for that *You* to which he is related by his very nature. From a subjective point of view, the believer perceives freedom in the fact that he is permitted to do what his heart transformed by God aspires to do, that is, to love] (M. Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* [München: Hueber, 1938], 791).

15. "Dann is die menschliche Freiheit ursprünglicher gegeben in der Übereinstimmung des wirklichen Selbstvollzugs eines Seienden mit seinem konkreten Wesen, so, dass es durch diesen Selbstvollzug wirklich bei sich selbst und so in seiner Wahrheit ist" [Therefore human freedom is originally brought about by the correspondence between a being's true self-fulfillment and its concrete nature, so that through this self-fulfillment it is truly with itself and therefore in its own truth] (K. Rahner, "Vorbemerkungen zum Problem der religiösen Freiheit," in *Theologische Fragen heute* [München: Hueber, 1966], 9).

16. "Die religiöse Wahrheit als solche ist grundsätzlich nur im Akt der Freiheit als solcher gegeben" [Religious truth as such is basically given only in the act of freedom as such] (ibid., 11).

17. "Immer dann wenn ein Mensch in Freiheit handelt, tut die Welt ihren letzten Schritt" [Whenever a person acts freely, the world takes its final step] (R. Guardini, "Freiheit und Unabänderlichkeit," in *Unterscheidung des Christlichen* [Mainz: Grünewald, 1963], 120).

18. "Das Wesen der Wahrheit enthülle sich als Freiheit" [The essence of truth is revealed as freedom] (M. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1954], 18).

19. "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 18 [Part A of Res. 217 [III], approved by the General Assembly, December 10, 1948]).

20. "1. A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man. And the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. . . .

"This sacred Synod likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth. . . .

"2. This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals

or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. . . .

"The Synod further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person, as this dignity is known through the revealed Word of God and by reason itself" [*Ius ad libertatem religiosam esse revera fundatum in ipsa dignitate personae humanae, qualis et verba Dei revelato et ipsa ratione cognoscitur*] (Nr. 1045 of the original). Vatican Council II, *Declaratio Dignitatis Humanae Personae, The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbot (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 675ff.

21.   For those who would like to check the mutation in the Roman Catholic Church they may compare the words of the previous document with the following statements of the last century popes as in the Denz.-Schön. Nrs. 2730, 2731, 2858, 2979, 3250, 3251, etc. Significantly enough the new edition of the Denzinger has eliminated the old paragraphs: 1617, 1618, 1642, 1666, 1690, which dealt with the same problem and probably in the eyes of the new editors were not only obsolete, but almost offensive to present-day mentality.

We may simply quote from Leo XIII's encyclical of 1888, *Libertas humana*: "Itaque ex dictis consequitur, nequaquam licere petere, defendere, largiri cogitandi, scribendi, docendi, itemque promiscuam religionum libertatem, veluti iura totidem, quae homini natura dederit. Nam si vere natura dedisset, imperium Dei detrectari ius esset, nec ulla temperari lege libertas humana posset" (Denz.-Schön. 3252) [And so from what has been said it follows that it is by no means lawful to demand, to defend and to grant indiscriminate freedom of thought, writing, teaching and likewise of belief, as if so many rights which nature has given to Man. For if nature had truly given these, it would be right to reject God's power, and human liberty could be restrained by no law].

4

HERMENEUTICS OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Paradigms and Models

This article comprises three parts: (1) an introduction situating some of the problems, (2) a central part concentrating on a specific point, and (3) a conclusion, where I sum up and restate my views in a different perspective.[1]

The Phases in the Meeting of Religions

I will begin by reflecting on the nature of comparative religion in the kairological situation of today. The discipline is very recent and yet already almost obsolete. It seems to be one of the characteristics of our epoch that everything that raises great expectations reveals some significant weakness within a very short time. Comparative religion may be a necessary methodological first step, but it has to be overcome (*aufgehoben*) the moment we put it in operation, for, as I will argue in the second section, it constitutively reveals its infeasibility. In other words, one begins to doubt the real validity of comparative religion as soon as one becomes aware of its operation. Yet comparative religion is a useful method to begin discovering certain common structures among religions. It also shows us that, for the most part, the relationship between the different religious traditions of the world has unfolded a kind of common typology. This typology may be summarized in five kairological moments,[2] which I offer as a general metahistorical sketch. In reality, however, the encounter between religions is much more complex. The five moments are the following:

1. *Isolation.* One could characterize the first period in the meeting of religions as one of *blessed mutual ignorance.* For various reasons, including historical, geographical, and cultural, the Jew, the Christian, the Hindū, and so on go their respective ways, paying little, if any, attention to each other. The "other" in fact, poses no problem since, quite practically speaking, he does not exist. Consequently, this self-sufficient provincialism in religion is a situation without conflict. The Bantus could afford to ignore Celtic religion.

2. *Indifference.* However, the state of "blessed mutual ignorance" lasts only as long as geography or history is a barrier. In the inevitable contact between peoples of different cultures and religions, curiosity concerning the stranger is bound to arise. With this come fascination

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and attraction but also fear and suspicion. A reaction of self-defense ensues, which is often guided by the exclusive conviction of the superiority of one's own culture or religion over all others. The state of ignorance has moved through a psychological mood of indifference to a situation of *contempt and rivalry*. Nevertheless, the "other" is still not at this point a religious problem. For example, it seemed obvious to Brahmanism that tribal religiousness was not equal to answering what Brahmanism considered to be the fundamental human questions.

3. *Condemnation*. However, with the establishment and stabilization of contact between cultures and the consequent growing awareness of the outsider, the stranger, there is an increasing need for self-identity. In the effort to abolish the growing threat of the other, rivalry gives way to dispute and the attempt to convert him to our views by any means judged honest. The maneuvers and means employed in the establishment and justification of self-identity vary according to the social and religious particularities of each civilization. The movement becomes one of *conquest*, and consequently, *condemnation* of others. Historical Judaism had to condemn idolatry.

4. *Coexistence*. The fourth attitude comes about when conquest gives way, as it inevitably does sooner or later, to the realization that *mutual tolerance* and *sincere communication* bring about reciprocal and lasting advantages. Rather than conquer the other by forceful domination, I see that his badness is not entirely his fault, but circumstantial. I now try to bring him into my fold and convert him on theoretical doctrinal grounds, as an existential undertaking. However, from the very moment I admit him into my religious world, comparison sets in. I discover that he is, in his own way, capable of achievements the means to which I thought I alone possessed. In the very attempt to convince the other of my claim to truth, the awareness arises that I am capable of learning from, and being taught by, the "stranger." Intellectual doubt begins as I realize that my information and interpretation are scanty and biased. I become aware of my own particular context and limitations. This communication brings about self-reflection, reevaluation, and new comparisons. When Christianity encountered Hinduism and was politically victorious, it had to establish a modus vivendi.

5. *Mutual fecundation*. We cannot live together too long without mutual influences, without being mutually contaminated. We cannot have dealings with one another without, before long, sympathy and love emerging here and there. The *convergence of frontiers* and the *intra-religious dialogue* is the fifth moment in my typology. It requires not only a welcoming and listening attitude but a capacity, or even the possibility, to understand. It means that what the other is and says strikes a chord in my own mind and heart. The dialogue begins to take place within myself. I begin to see that the problem regarding the other is not whether to accept or refute him, but to discover the impossibility of totally refuting or accepting him. The experience of discovering positive values in the other that I cannot account for breaks the generally undeclared total self-sufficiency of my own tradition. Dialogue means, too, the doubt that perhaps the "other's" views are parts of the truth, vectors of reality, perspectives on what lies both outside of me and in the interior of my own reflection. In short, the "other" becomes complementary to oneself.

Comparative Religion Reconsidered

Comparative religion is neither a study that proceeds by a mere juxtaposition of religions nor an evaluation of one religion from the point of view of another. Comparative religion is rather an analysis of the self-understanding of different religions, and is ultimately a cross-cultural problem. For not only is the concept "religion" not univocal, but the various religions of the world have very different understandings of what is meant by that name. The question

inevitably arises as to whether there is such a thing as "religion" at all, or whether there are even "religions." If they do exist, we must ask ourselves what we mean by saying that they do. How do we measure, compare them?

The prima facie meaning of comparative philosophy of religion implies that there is a neutral ground, a meta-philosophy, from which to critically scrutinize different religions. This notion is inherently self-contradictory since such a ground should be human and not-human at the same time. Put in the form of a *sūtra*:

> *How can there be a No-Man's land in the land of Man?*

The search for this neutral ground evolved as a result of the present-day scientific passion for "objectivity," and many of the conceptions of comparative religion arise from a precritical philosophical position that assumes that there is an unmistakably recognizable transcendent point of view, call it divine, neutral, objective.

However, having recently discovered the provinciality of our philosophizing in the field of world religions, we turned to comparative philosophy of religion. But without fundamental changes in our methods, this new discipline can take us no farther than the old approaches. The only strictly comparable entities are quantities, so that we can only properly compare if we succeed in bringing the data of philosophy and/or religion to quantitative parameters. Comparison demands a scale, and any scale is quantitative. Comparative Philosophy of Religion as such becomes a "science" like the natural sciences, which seek mathematical paradigms capable of expressing the behavior of natural phenomena. The common scale necessary for comparison can only be found if both sides, the comparer and the compared, share a common ground where they are in agreement about applying a particular criterion as the *comparandum*. But the nature of this common ground presents difficulties. The following aporias mention some of them:

1. If it is taken for granted—that is, if one single philosophy is assumed to be shared by different traditions—we can undertake quantitative comparison. This is not, properly speaking, comparative philosophy of religion. It is rather a (particular) philosophy of religion(s). It is also very tentative, since it breaks down as a method the moment anyone asks for a justification of the premises. We cannot compare if the compared challenges the scale of comparison.

2. If this common ground is mutually recognized by the philosophies or religions concerned, we can have a philosophical comparison of religions, resting on a position that serves as a point of reference so long as it is not contested. This means that there can be a comparative study of those religions that belong to one philosophical club, as it were. But this becomes comparative philosophy only *secundum quid*. It is not really comparative philosophy of religion since the club's position, like any other, is a view of the world and not of worldviews. The problem is shifted to discussing the number and the nature of the possible common grounds.

3. If comparative philosophy is the formal analysis of common structures, the comparable entities have to be found by reducing the philosophical or religious facts to quantifiable formalities. This may be a useful heuristic device for discovering affinities and common patterns among different religions, since the total nature of a religious *symbol*, for instance, is neither contained nor expressed in the formal *sign* that has been ascribed to it (for example, the differences between *bhagavan, deus, hypsistos* or *bhakti, eros, agapé*, cannot be rendered by adding some distinctive coefficient to the same basic sign, viz., *ax* versus *bx* versus *cx*, etc.), but this method cannot be called either comparative philosophy of religion or religiology. I would instead call it "religiography." It may reveal patterns and paradigms hitherto unknown but obscures the important fact that the religious dimension may be sui generis and thus incommensurable with quantitative parameters. In other words, there may exist a

plus irreducible to any formalization. The originality of religion does not lie in its structure, but in how this structure is filled.

4. The middle way between the reductionisms of pure quantifications and the atomistic conceptions of mutually uncommunicable human constructs is an approach that underscores the homogeneity of human nature. But the moment we formulate this unity we have to give concrete intellectual contents to it, and this conceptualization is already far from being universal. We cannot identify "common human nature" with our concept of it.

For examples, in the West, the word used to characterize the *humanum* is "rationality." Man is *animal rationale*. However, if this is considered to be the ultimate judge in the field of comparative philosophy, many a philosophical or religious system not subscribing to this view will be excluded from the comparison, or reduced to a rational structure that does not represent its own supposedly self-understood nature. Moreover, interpretations of "rationality" may differ fundamentally even in the case of formal agreement, so that comparative philosophy finds itself relying on a basis that should itself be the outcome of it, that is, the philosophical understanding of the nature of rationality from a "comparativistic" perspective.

5. One might possibly obviate the difficulty by shifting the problem from systems and traditions to concrete human issues, in which case in comparative philosophy one would not compare one tradition with another but would study various fundamental issues—for instance, evil, God, suffering, peace of mind, the destiny of human beings, and so on, in the light of, say, the Hindū and the Christian traditions. Although this method can be very fruitful, the main problem is proving that there are, in fact, certain philosophical and religious problems that can be considered independently of the tradition in whose light these problems are seen. Even to claim that God is a problem, that peace is a supreme value, amounts to speaking from the vantage point of particular systems. There are no naked texts, no pure facts in philosophy or religion or any human awareness. And even if we granted the reality of *noēmata* as pure data in a transcendental consciousness, there could be no *pisteumata* independent of the particular beliefs of the adherents. For example, the belief in *duḥkha* in traditional Pali cannot be equated with "suffering" in modern English.

6. If we move away from grand comparison and approach each philosophy in terms of its internal coherence, we are left without criteria for comparison, since the several rules of internal coherence need not be the same. We could only evaluate the different systems internally, which may be a sound classificatory analysis, but is it comparative philosophy?

It may be a truism to say that comparative studies is concerned with speaking beings, but the fact is often overlooked that, if we are comparing speaking beings, we must learn to listen to them. Comparative studies is basically a question of communication and language. To come to an agreement or disagreement about any common issue requires a common language. Comparative philosophy is then reduced to the problem of a common human language.

Thus communication between different religions involves belief in the translatability of different philosophical and religious languages. Translation, however, is not only an individual activity but is dependent on a common frame of reference that the translator finds already existing. Today, due to the intermingling of cultures, this common context has become peculiarly dynamic. For instance, a modern Roman Catholic will find it much easier to use the word "grace" to express an analogous concept found in some Asian religions than would have been the case a few decades ago. Emerging from syncretism and eclecticism, comparative philosophy is an expression of the factual praxis of the human situation. And today, a new philosophical *theōria* is emerging from the praxis of our pluralistic situation.

However, by its very nature, translation entails the integration of one more or less partial view of the world with another, and this cannot properly be called comparative philosophy or comparative religion.

The problem outlined in the above aporias may be overcome by recovering the original sense of philosophy as a total human exchange in the Socratic or Upanishadic sense of dialogue, rather than the modern Western (post-Cartesian) conception of philosophy as an isolated and exclusively rational reflection around a *poele*. Traditionally, a thinker confronts what he assumes are generally held views with his own convictions. However, in order to make himself understood he must situate his discourse into a context that makes it both comprehensible and convincing. Although this approach, when genuine, always tried to be fair to the "opponent," it was, by and large, a double monologue, and, in the final analysis, a question of depriving the other, of domination by comparison.

Today, a new factor has emerged. The two disciplines, comparative philosophy and comparative religion, are born not only out of the old universal desire to understand; they emerge from the insight that it might not be possible to understand foreign cultures and religions without deforming or compromising them. The question arises: Can we understand without reducing the phenomenon to our patterns of understanding? This new question is the outcome of the deleterious results of monistic approaches: *one* God, *one* Church, *one* Empire, *one* Reason, *one* Science, *one* Technology, and so on.

There is a new need to understand the other in his or her own terms, even to the extreme that we may only understand that we do not understand. The word is pluralism, that is, the effort to overcome unconnected plurality without, however, falling into undifferentiated unity. This is not so much the desire for comparison, that is, self-assertion, as for dialogue. It is not *what* the other says (*aliud*) that counts, but *who* the other is (*alius*); not what I think about the other, which is important, but whether I can grasp what the other thinks about him- or herself.

This is *dialogal philosophy*. The comparison is not made from the viewpoint of one philosophy or philosopher but is processual, a multivoiced process in which the different partners are allowed to express themselves according to their own categories, contexts, and self-understandings. It is no longer a question of the scientific way of understanding how elements *function* so much as knowing what they *are*.

Since many a philosophy or religion regards itself as ultimate, we cannot justifiably compare that which purports to be unique and incomparable. For this reason I prefer the neologism *imparative philosophy*, since we can only truly *imparare*, that is, learn by being ready to undergo the different experiences of other peoples, philosophies, and religions. This kind of learning is reflective, critical, and provisional.

Imparative philosophy recognizes that we cannot avoid taking a stand somewhere when we philosophize. There is no neutral ground in the human arena. All reflection is, by its very nature, contextual and therefore partial. There is no fulcrum outside time and space from which to objectively view all other views. *Imparative philosophy* thus (1) is critically aware of the contingency of its own assumptions and the unavoidable necessity of resting on still unexamined presuppositions;[3] (2) is constitutively ready to question its basic foundations

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[3] I make a fundamental distinction between "assumption" and "presupposition." Assumptions are axioms that I consciously appropriate as the basis of my thinking, in order to study further. Presuppositions, on the other hand, are unconscious and at the basis of my construction (supposition = *sub-ponere*). They are also sent "before," so that they allow me to examine where I am standing (presupposition). Once I have become aware of a presupposition, I can choose to either accept it, in which case it becomes an assumption, or reject it, in which case I will have to change my earlier standpoint. Reflection converts presuppositions into assumptions.

if they are challenged; (3) is primarily concerned with searching for the primordial ground of philosophizing (understanding); (4) attempts to form its philosophical view of reality by systematically taking into account the universal range of Man's experience inasmuch as this is possible in any finite situation; (5) is open to dialogal dialogue with other philosophical and religious views, and not only to dialectical confrontation and rational discussion. It must be capable of revealing the truth of respective philosophies, not just expressing their formal correctness.

It is this last point that, in its constitutively processual and open nature, marks the passage from *imparative philosophy* to *dialogal philosophy*. For only in the dialogue itself can misunderstandings be eliminated and mutual fecundation take place. The dialogue is thus not only a method but an essential part of the subject-matter.

Philosophy as such implies a new hermeneutics, which I have called *diatopical*, and becomes a collective enterprise, which includes essentially both spectator and spectacle. There is nothing radically new in trying to become aware of one's own relativity. The novelty lies in the fact that *dialogal philosophy* wants to understand the *other* understander qua source of self-understanding. Unlike the natural sciences, which have an objective criterion of measurement, *dialogal philosophy* as the method in the comparative philosophy of religion can never assume a universally accepted outside *metron* for comparison. It is, in the Master of Alexander's words, "wisdom that constitutively searches itself."

Three Models

Another way of articulating and expressing in more concrete terms these difficult problems would be to take root-metaphors. It is here that some models may prove useful. I shall briefly describe three of them.

The Rainbow Model

The different religious traditions of humankind are like the almost infinite number of colors that appear once the simply white light of reality falls on the prism of human experience; it diffracts into innumerable traditions, doctrines, and religions, through culture, geography, and many other factors. Through any particular color, namely, religion, one can reach the source of the white light. Provided there is not total darkness, any follower of a human tradition can reach his or her fullness, salvation. Just as the mixing of two colors may give rise to another, so the meeting of two religious traditions may give birth to a new one. In fact, most of today's religions are the result of such mutual combinations.

Though religions merge at the fringes, each of them forms a particular context that colors a view of things. Within the green area all will appear greenish. A similar object within the red area will appear in a red light. This model illustrates the paramount importance of the context in comparing "religious truths." The variety of human experiences precludes the possibility of a total view from a single perspective.

The metaphor can be extended. Just as the color of a body is, generally speaking, the only color that the body does not absorb, so each religion has—hidden within itself—all the other colors. The external color is its appearance, its message to the world, but not the totality of its nature. I realize this when we attempt to understand a religion from within.

This metaphor does not necessarily imply that all religions are the same. There may be black or colorless spots. A humanistic critique of traditional religions may call the religions of the past "obscurantist" and deny them the character of bearing light; only

the Enlightenment traditions of rationalism, Marxism, and humanism would come under consideration.

The metaphor could even be extended to provide an image of one particular religion considering itself as the white beam, and all the others as refractions of that primordial religiousness.

It shows us how the variety of religions belongs to the beauty and richness of the human situation. Only the entire rainbow can provide a complete picture of the true religious dimension of Man. Thus this rules out a priori that that which is not known cannot be accepted in a true encounter of religions.

The Geometrical or Topological Model

Here deformation, not diffraction, is the cause of the different forms and shapes of religions. Geometrically speaking, topological deformations are the different homeomorphic correspondences of one primordial position. Different sets of symbols express that reality according to the topological situation of any given body. This means that each religion is a dimension of the other, although they appear different and even mutually irreconcilable unless a topological invariant is found. The invariant may be the theory of families of religions, or the hypothesis that all the various human ways come from a fundamental experience, transformed according to laws that have to be discovered. Or again, it might be that all religions are actually different until the topological transformations have been constructed.

Since all religions are dimensions of the one original form and thus dimensions of each other, each major religious tradition contains the whole canon of everything. In this sense every authentic religion embodies the whole truth in its own characteristic way. This, however, can only be accepted by a deep understanding of the homeomorphic correspondences within each system. There is no call in this understanding and encounter for anything other than what is contained within the inner structure of the systems themselves. Comparison among religions thus is not a question of finding analogies nor of continuing the self-defeating search for the perfect "neutral" ground from which to view all things. Rather, it involves recognizing the *circumincessio*, *perichōrēsis*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, or "connaturality" between the different religious traditions, so that analogous or continuity models become insufficient to express the relation. What is needed is an understanding of religions from within, an uncovering of their concrete structures to find by deeper intuition, whether this be scientific or mystical, their corresponding equivalences.

An awareness of the difference between homeomorphism and analogy is fundamental to a real understanding of religions. For example, "*brahman*" and "God" are not merely two analogous names. *Brahman* could perhaps be described as total, fundamental immanence, while God in the Semitic traditions is transcendent; God is a person, *brahman* is not; the one is the creator of contingent beings, the other is the origin of the possibility of being, and so on. An analysis of the attributes of God and *brahman* will uncover no analogy. Yet between the two there is a relationship that allows me to think, speak, and feel about them similarly, in a way that cannot be so stated of *brahman* and "chair," or God and "table." The relationship is homeomorphic in that the symbol "God" within one tradition performs an equivalent function to the symbol "*brahman*" in another.

The function is not analogous: God maintains order from on high; *brahman* is the ground and condition of all there is. Rather, there is a relationship that is geometrical and topological, and that is accounted for by the topological model. So religions that on the

surface and at first sight appear very different may find connections once the topological transformation is found that permits a connection—though without reducing the uniqueness to sameness or even similarity.

The Linguistic Model

Like any language, each religion is complete in its own way and capable of expressing everything it feels the need to express. When the need to express something new arises, the means to express it is found. New needs emerge since no particular language can exhaust the range of human experience or possibilities. Religion as language must thus be open to growth and evolution and be capable of change and redefinition as the occasion calls.

Constituting a world in itself, each language gives and takes from its neighbors, exercising a mutual and reciprocal influence. However—and this is an important point—each language only takes as much as it can assimilate. Before a totally foreign word can be introduced, there must be receptivity and a readiness to accept, or the word cannot even be received. In short, there must be already something within the language capable of accepting, understanding, adapting, or refuting the particular word, sentence, or vision of the world that is introduced by the impact of the other. The same, of course, applies to religions. It is in this open and receptive attitude that enrichment can take place.

Now, the great difficulty in the encounter of languages appears in the twofold problem of understanding and translation, namely, a common "linguisticity." In order to speak another language I must first learn it, that is, I have to be taught. The comparative study of religion thus necessitates first of all the humility of learning, of "sitting at the feet"[4] of the other. If my language is Buddhism and I want to speak Islam, I must enter wholeheartedly into the new language, feel within it, incorporate into myself everything that is taught to me. Only then when I have made it my own can I really speak it. Since a language is total in itself, I only really speak it when there is no conflict between what I want to express and what I can express. In other words, the language becomes a perfect means of expressing what I need to say, which amounts to saying that learning another language is not an acquired skill that I superimpose onto my previous situation; rather, I have to grow toward and into the whole context of the other tradition. Only in this way can mutual fecundation and expansion take place between my language, namely, religion, and the new one.

Religions are equivalent to the same extent that languages are translatable. This translatable sphere refers first of all to the common world of objects that can be empirically verified. For each such object there is an epistemic sign: "tree," "atom," "wine," and so on. These I call "terms," and because they are all empirically verifiable within certain conditions, they are also translatable, which means that if a language has no particular name for an object, a term can quite easily be invented or adopted.

But the most vital part of a language, as well as a religion, is its uniqueness, its untranslatability. This is the realm, not of epistemic signs to orientate us in the world of objects, but of symbols that permit us to live in the world of human beings. The uniqueness of language lies in "words," which, unlike terms, reflect a total human experience. They are not objectifiable because they are not totally separable from the particular instance in which they are used, and the meaning are given. Each word is uniquely used, and every usage of a single word is equally unique, in that each of us gives different shades of meaning to the same word, and one person uses a single word in a variety of ways.

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[4] *Editor's note:* Biblical phrase meaning the disciple listening to the master/rabbi; cf. Acts 22:3.

Consequently, words like "justice," "God," "*brahman*," which have no empirical referent, cannot be understood outside the human experiences crystallized around them, which vary with history, geography, psychology, and so on. They cannot be translated outside these contexts but have rather to be transplanted along with the soil in which they are rooted, the worldview that gives them their meaning. Thus a word can only be heard if it is not severed from its speaker. This "hearing" is an essential act in transplanting. The word extends its roots into the fertile soil of the listener and there undergoes growth and transformation, acquiring new connotations, aspects, expansions of meaning.

The translator of a foreign language, an alien tradition, must be a true spokesman for that religion, able to speak it *by heart*, knowing its words, not merely its terms. He must have taken the risk of involvement in and commitment to the religion. He must have understood (stood under) it. This is the meaning of an encounter qua encounter that does not sidestep to "neutral" ground, nor expects to achieve movement by not moving from the original place. In short, only the person who really speaks the language, that is, who is fulfilled in it, can be a genuine translator.

In sum, the linguistic model helps us in our problem of rethinking comparative religions. *Religions* as language cannot be compared outside *religion* as language, which would not be an artificially posited No-Man's land with no bearing on reality and therefore no constitutive meaning. As I suggested earlier, only when we have a common language can we begin to compare, that is, to weigh against a common background. Comparative religion can only be comparative from the standpoint of the concrete religions themselves. This demands an entirely new method, quite different from the one that arises out of the assumption that there is a nonreligious neutral "rationality" entitled to comparatively scrutinize in the field of religions.

In order to find a common method by which to engage in the encounter of religions today, we must take a long look at the human condition. We must work with the present reality of pluralism, which lies between monolithic unity and unrelated plurality—to discover, in the existing polarities, the richness of our real being.

5

PHILOSOPHICAL PLURALISM AND
THE PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS

As long as there is not a single universal language, there will never be just one philosophy of religion. Languages are more than nominalistic tools to handle independently given realities. The old myth of the Tower of Babel speaks of the apparently constitutive human dream of a single language. YHWH sees this dream as the symbol of Man wanting to be equal to God, and in fact with the Tower of Babel, Man did want to reach heaven. But YHWH shatters this constant human temptation to build a single monolithic world by confusing humanity's *logos*. Instead of constructing a new neocolonialistic tower, we can perhaps make inroads of communication, even of communion, among the human huts of our various limited worlds. The danger of a disembodied intellect is in losing the sense of human scale and falling into dehumanizing ideologies.

What we have in our case, in fact, is a *plurality* of philosophies of religions, just as we have many languages. Now, to become aware of any plurality leads the human spirit to wonder if there is any way to overcome the multiplicity by discovering an underlying unity. But the price of unity may be the loss of identity. The unity of the pattern of the human skeleton cannot be equated with the practically infinite variety of our personal bodies. In other words, between a plurality de facto and a unity *de ratione* there may be room for a pluralism *de iure*. To be sure, this pluralism shatters the *myth of the logos* as the unique horizon of intelligibility, and reveals the *logos of the myth*, the *mythoslegein*, inherent in the human condition.

A Preliminary Hermeneutic

Taking seriously the cultural pluralism of humanity, that is, abandoning the monolinear idea of human progress, we can no longer hold the theory that explains the different religions as different degrees of approximation to the one ideal we hold of religion. This is to say that the consciousness of plurality of religions leads us to a hermeneutic of religion. But by the same token, a hermeneutic of religion becomes a hermeneutic of the philosophies of religion, that is, a hermeneutic of the philosophies of religion. We should then ask ourselves both about the nature of the concepts "religion" and "philosophy," and about the subject doing the hermeneutic. But this latter is conditioned in turn by the particular concepts of religion and philosophy that the interpreter holds to be true. A hermeneutic of philosophy of religion has to interpret not an objectively nonexistent "religion," but a given "concept" of religion that philosophers have actually developed. The different concepts of "philosophy" and "religion" have to be incorporated into such a hermeneutic. I cannot assume that my point of departure and my perspective are shared by all humanity. In point of fact the study

of religion independently of the beliefs that people actually have and according only to my own criteria would not be a study of real religion but only the interpretation of something that exists in my mind.

In order to be brief and as clear as possible, I will define my concepts:

By *pluralism* I mean the awareness of the legitimate coexistence of systems of thought, life, and action that are judged incompatible among themselves.

We may indeed recognize pluralism as a fact, but it is not intelligible in its contents, otherwise we would have a supersystem that would by definition destroy all pluralism. Pluralism is of the order of *mythos* and not of *logos*. It would be impossible to build a pluralist system. Pluralism belongs to the order of existence and not to that of essence. It is not a merely formal concept like plurality, but it is also not a material concept like unity.

By *philosophy* I understand a system of thought, or even of action, offering a structure that enables one to find the most universal form of intelligibility, given one's presuppositions.

Religion I understand as a belief in a set of symbols that express the ultimate meaning of life. In existential terms, I would simply say religion is the *ultimate path*, that is to say, the way that people believe leads to their goal. The way of course varies in accordance with the different concepts of the goal: salvation, liberation, plenitude, void, the absurd, and so on. In Greek, one might even hazard a single word: *eschathodos*, the final way.

Lastly, I consider *philosophy of religion* as the human reflection on the nature of religion, assuming the latter in its ultimate constitution.

This last definition needs some clarification. If Man is not merely an object of research but also a self-conscious subject, then no true understanding of any human phenomenon is possible if separated from what people have thought, believed, and imagined about the object. In other words, Man's self-understanding belongs to that which Man is. Understanding may not always be self-understanding, but it is always understanding by self. But I am not the only self. My understanding is not the only one, nor can it be substituted for the self-understanding of others. Thus, to come to our problem: Religion includes what people have thought it is. Hence the problem is not one of a hermeneutic of religion, but one of a hermeneutic of the philosophy of religion, that is, a hermeneutic of the (philosophical) interpretations that people have given of religion.

Intercultural problems here are immense. Logically, "philosophy of religion" cannot exist except where "philosophy" and "religion" exist—but it can equally be maintained that "philosophy of religion" may be used to mean far more than such a denomination literally conveys. How, for instance, would one say "philosophy of religion" in Sanskrit, in Chinese, in Kisange or Sesuto? Before discussing any hermeneutic of the philosophy of religion with a pretension to universality, therefore, we need to make clear just what is meant by the phrase "philosophy of religion." I shall from now on no longer consider the different meanings of "philosophy" and of "religion," but, in a higher degree of abstraction, the different types of "philosophy of religion."

Four Types of "Philosophy of Religion"

In my opinion, we usually use this expression ultimately intending the fourth type mentioned below, while unaware that we are still at one of the preceding levels. Our having often overlooked these four types has created confusions not only in theoretical and academic studies, but in the political, religious, and cultural worlds as well. The four types may be distinguished as follows:

1. The philosophies of religions
2. The philosophies of religion
3. The philosophy of religions
4. The philosophy of religion

There is an inevitable problem of semantics here. The categories with which one seeks to elucidate a problem belong themselves to the problem. If one uses particular categories for posing a transcultural problem, one does not command an adequate language; and if one translates them, one already uses foreign categories—even assuming that the translation is right. We should therefore use names as they refer to the intentionality that gave rise to the original words. Need we speak of sense (semiology: structure or internal coherence) and signification (semantics: meaning for a subject), or referent (world) and intentionality (of the author)?

Be this as it may, I shall concentrate on the explication of my typology, leaving a hermeneutic of the language employed for another occasion.

The Philosophies of Religions

These are philosophical efforts within particular cultures that try to render the religious problem intelligible from the perspective of a specific religion: particular philosophies of specific religions. This first type of philosophy of religion includes also any philosophical criticism within a religion made by the means provided by that religion. A specific example is the philosophy of Christianity in the West, even if the philosophical instruments used are not explicitly Christian. Here also belongs what is generally called theology, that is, the effort at intelligibility from within a religion itself.

Of course, any philosophical construction has an intrinsic claim to universality, but the very sphere of that universality is limited by our presuppositions. There is in any affirmation the underlying claim that it is valid for the horizon one considers as given. But we can never define this horizon without destroying it as horizon.

However, the problem is not so simple, since the impulse to universalize is inherent in the human mind. The philosophy of Christianity, for instance, falls in this pitfall of extrapolating categories of understanding. This is done even when one limits oneself to a mere questioning of other religions, without realizing that the questions are already conditioned as much by the responses expected as by the concepts used in formulating the questions. When, for example, a Christian asks if Hinduism and Buddhism also have a God, the Christian already commits an unjustified extrapolation. When writing philosophy of religion starting from a Thomistic, Marxist, Theravadic, or linguistic analysis of the religious fact, we often have a philosophy of religion that is applied to other religious traditions. If history did not furnish us with enough examples of the frequently tragic results of misunderstandings of this kind, one might doubt the existence of any such problem. I am inclined to think that a large number of the philosophies of religions written today still belong to this first type. Both apologetics as well as criticisms of religion mostly appertain to this first type of philosophy of religion.

The Philosophies of Religion

This second category denotes the several philosophies of a particular religion. The rich and complex religious traditions of humanity have given birth to several philosophical systems. The philosophical pluralism at the heart of contemporary Christianity is a pertinent example, and the great Western Christian systems associated with the names of

Augustine, Aquinas, Thomas, Descartes, Hegel, and others might also be cited. We do not have a super-philosophy but a variety of philosophical systems claiming to give us a valid philosophy of a specific religion, even though the kind of unjustified extrapolation found in the first type of philosophy may also be present here, this time between philosophies of a single religion.

In this second type the hiatus between religion and philosophy is greater than in the first type, where the philosophy of religion has only to explain and criticize religious beliefs different from those serving as its own basis. For example, for a certain Christian philosophical milieu it will not appear surprising that "pagans," "infidels," or "barbarians" may have a philosophy—of their own tradition—that helps them to understand their own religious situation. But that a post-tridentine Catholic, a believer and a philosopher, could have an intelligent understanding of reality without also subscribing to, say, the twenty-four Thomistic theses will not pass without posing a serious philosophical problem. The disparity between the two attitudes touches on the very nature of philosophy and religion.

Each religious tradition can beget its own philosophical understanding, but something remains philosophically problematic if within one single tradition we have a plurality of philosophies. How can a Muslim, for instance, subscribe to a Hegelian or Marxist philosophy? We are witnessing here the birth of philosophical pluralism. The different philosophies have become options based upon ultimate forms of intelligibility—though naturally from the point of view of any one of these options the others may be judged erroneous, inadequate, or incomplete.

This pluralism is based on at least one of the two following assumptions:

a. No philosophy can reach its own ideal of being ultimate, so there may always be the possibility of irreducibly ultimate options.

b. Religion is ever transcendent to any philosophical speculation, so no philosophy can ever exhaust the understanding of the religious fact.

The Philosophy of Religions

The present quest in India for a Hindū-Christian philosophy (or theology, as many would prefer to call it) does not consist in trying to formulate or reformulate Christian concepts in Hindū terms, but in finding a common language that would permit expression of the fundamental intuitions of both traditions without doing violence to either.

The danger here is that religion may be reduced to philosophy, in this case to a sort of rationalism or latent intellectualism in which the human intellect is considered powerful enough to encompass the traditionally irreconcilable. And in fact, the majority of philosophical systems that have a cultural and multireligious vitality do seem to suffer from a certain gnosticism. "True" philosophy becomes "authentic" religion and the "genuine" substitute for the "superstition of the masses." One understands the prudence and even the mistrust with which religious authorities regard facile syncretism or eclecticism, which, however well-intended, would strip religion of its most precious elements. Here philosophy may easily appear to be more fundamentalist than religion.

The Philosophy of Religion

This fourth type represents a certain ideal of philosophy of religion, since it would offer a philosophy valid for the religious experience of all humanity. This would be a single philosophy for understanding and criticizing any religion existing on earth.

If the danger that threatens the first and second types is uncritical extrapolation, and the temptation in the third type is reductionism (reducing religion to philosophy, which is logical, since there is a common philosophical nucleus), the snare in this fourth type lies in reducing philosophy to formalism—of structure or of essence or the like—and/or in reducing religion to a super-metaphysics common to all. Certain traditionalist and metaphysical positions would appear to have fallen into that snare: the "real thing," they will tell us, is the primordial tradition, or the primitive revelation, or the primary metaphysical insights. A kind of mystical philosophy underlying all religions may be adduced as another instance.

All the same, this fourth type may well be the inevitable model for any really profound encounter in a cross-cultural setting. Can we be content with a philosophy of religion valid for certain provinces of human experience only? Can we ignore the religions of others? Should we not try to comprehend the human experience in its totality? Should the Tower of Babel be rebuilt? Or is it, perhaps, necessary to renounce the great Babel-constructions and be content with establishing *paths of mediation*? Might there not be the ways of communication, the means of communion?

The question may be put simply, by asking if any agreement is possible among the different religious traditions of humanity. Is the philosophy of religion not the place, the bridge, necessary for the encounter of religions? Does it not have a mediating function? But the answer is not as simple as the question. We shall proceed, at best, to point out some milestones on the way.

Hermeneutic of Philosophy of Religion
instead of Hermeneutic of Religion

If we are all imprisoned in our own hermeneutic circle—if there is nothing more than a plurality of hermeneutics and a plurality of religions—what is going to break the circle in order to open us to a comprehension of that most profound dimension of the human spirit?

In his introduction to the colloquium *Herméneutique de la philosophie de la religion*,[1] Enrico Castelli wonders whether there should be "Emancipation from religion, or emancipation through religion?" And he adds: "This is the question to which the hermeneutic of the new philosophy of religion is called to respond." I think that the call comes not only from the "secularization" of the West, which he underlines, but also from the religions, ancient and modern, of the world.

My response to Castelli is this: we should have emancipation from religions through religion itself, purification of concrete religions by the religious spirit of humanity. However, the religious dimension only exists in our concrete religious attitudes. For any critique of religion, positive or negative, I have to stand somewhere. And this place has to be as fundamental as religion claims to be, that is, it has to be religious too.

Here are seven points I venture to signal.

1. The recognition that we do not have a philosophy of religion of the fourth type seems to me a first positive step in the right direction. The first condition for going beyond the confines of our traditions is perhaps to be conscious of our own limitations. Any cross-cultural enterprise should begin with the awareness that there are frontiers to cross and human rights

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to respect. To question my own categories of understanding, even if I cannot jump over them, perplexes me, but it redeems me from my own closed circle.

2. It is true that we do not have a philosophy of religion, but can we renounce it? The human spirit seems unable to stop short of a certain unity that appears necessary, indeed vital, to it. To be sure, it remains an ideal, the goal is transcendent: the omega-point is always beyond our reach. Certainly, we cannot remain enclosed, self-content within ourselves, but setting out to conquer others (with our own weapons of understanding) is not always the best alternative. One should also open oneself to the other, allow oneself to be invaded. But where then shall we meet? At my place? At the other's? At a third one's place? Or in the middle of the road?

3. In the ultimate encounters there is no third place, nor is there a middle of the road: there is no neutral ground. How can there be a "No-Man's" land in the land of "Man"? To believe that dialectics could offer us such a place seems to me a fallacy arising from a dialectical analysis of human awareness. It also contradicts a given fact: reality does not have a dialectical structure. And among all the human events on earth, the dynamism of religions especially cannot be reduced to dialectical games. Human existence is prompted by such a spontaneity, freedom, providence, or chaos that it defies any reduction to rules, dialectical or not.

4. Nevertheless, we cannot renounce our right to intelligibility under the pretext that we cannot understand everything, nor can we put an end to contacts and dialogue. But how is it possible, if in this dialogue nobody should impose rules of the game on anybody else? The *dialogical dialogue* is, in my opinion, indispensable as the only, or at least as the most promising, chance for a fruitful encounter.

The dialogical dialogue does not replace dialectics, but complements it. It is not based on a common confidence in the neutral field of logical dialectics, but on a true reciprocal confidence in the other, that is, in the fact that the other is a source of understanding and original perspectives just as much as I am. Consequently, the other is worthy not only of moral respect, but also of philosophical consideration, even if I find his or her opinions quite unintelligible. The dialogical dialogue is truly an "opening of the *logos*" (*dia ton logon*), attaining that other sphere of human experience that is only possible through confidence in the other as *other* and not just in *what* I understand that the other says. In the dialogical dialogue I am open to the other in such a way that my partner can discover my myths, my subjacent assumptions—and vice versa, of course. The authentic dialogue exists neither in what I say, nor in what my partner adds, but in that which takes place in the dialogue itself. Neither of us knows what is going to happen beforehand, nor have we any power over it during the process. Only when we stand-under the spell of the words happening between us can we under-stand each other. We both listen.

5. This means that philosophy of religion cannot properly be called by that name unless it has in one form or another included the religious experience of humanity in its totality. Insofar as there may be some religion, perhaps unknown to the rest of the world, which has not yet spoken of its own way of conceiving the problem, we cannot speak of a *philosophy* of *religion* that fully embraces the purport of those two words. Any analysis of the human situation is always provisional, on the way both to reaching the truth and to being overcome.

6. Paradoxically, then, the first function of the philosophy of religion will be to recognize its own limits and to keep them open, to have a constant critical attitude in the face of the above-mentioned dangers of extrapolation and reductionism. The human phenomenon transcends us, and our understanding of pluralism obliges us to accept the contingency of all our opinions, even of the philosophical and religious ones.

7. This leads us to the search for the passage from a de facto plurality to a de jure pluralism. Within the limits of philosophy a certain pluralism has always been accepted: one may not agree with other ways of thought, but besides the ethical obligation to tolerate them, there is the positive conviction of the richness of diversity, hence of pluralism. What kind of world would it be if Leibniz, for example, were the only patron of philosophy—or St. Thomas, or Hegel? We may be convinced that the philosophical system of Malebranche is false, for instance, and still find that the philosophical mosaic of the West offers a panorama of extraordinary beauty and variety, even though it may not be philosophically evident. It is sometimes difficult to recognize the rights of a particular philosophy: the *cārvākas* of India are the classical example of the "villain" in this regard, while the bourgeois mentality may be the undissecured victim of a Marxist ideology. But because it arises from an order that is greater than we are, we must admit today that philosophical diversity is not just a minor evil to be tolerated; it is a major fact to be taken into consideration.

We are much less advanced within the limits of religions. And precisely this, in my opinion, makes the problem of the philosophy of religion so important. Religious wars are still a reality: many people are not yet disposed to admit on the theoretical plane that the de facto plurality of religions may be recognized as a pluralism de jure. To recognize religious pluralism touches on a more profound level of the human spirit than the level reached by recognizing philosophical pluralism. From the point of view of a specific philosophy and/or of a particular religion, one may criticize the opinions of others, one must even denounce them if they seem erroneous or even harmful, but one should not raise one's own criteria as absolute values. In fact, history shows us that often, thanks to the "errors" of "adversaries," the truth is purified more and more, and shines all the more brightly.

Religious pluralism should not be confused with religious indifference, or with a condescending eclecticism that tolerates all religions because fundamentally all of them are considered to be irrelevant. I repeat that pluralism cannot give rise to a supersystem or a superior point of view without, by that very fact, destroying itself. A system open to the understanding of other systems, or a religion as flexible, as welcoming and universal as possible, are imperatives for our times, but they are not examples of pluralism. When a certain Vedanta and a certain Christian theology believe themselves to be tolerant because they accept the validity and even the truth of all religions, providing that they range themselves in their places and play the role that is assigned to them, this Vedānta and this Christianity are perhaps magnanimous and may even be right, but they offer, certainly, no example of pluralism.

There is a fundamental difference between pluralism and mere plurality. The most central presupposition of pluralism is the conviction that no system can exhaust the horizon of human experience, and that to want to fix the conditions or to suggest the possibilities according to which one attains the ultimate realities implies either an excessive rationalism or the pride of believing oneself in possession of a criterion of truth that does not take into account what fragile vessels we are.

In short, the hermeneutic of religion is always a hermeneutic of the philosophy of religion, and this hermeneutic is always in process, never finished. It is not a philosophy or philosophies of religion or religions, but an ever open philosophy in search both of its proper object and of its own subject, because the human way consists in the going itself. The very awareness of the ultimate dimension of humanity is philosophizing about our religiousness.

6

The Secularization of Hermeneutics

The Instance of Christ: Son of Man and Son of God

"Who do men say that the Son of Man is?"

Mt 16:13 NEB[1]

The theme of this chapter, the hermeneutics of secularization, can also be approached *in obliquo* by observing the concrete operation of the secularization of hermeneutics. Hence my attempt at a double hermeneutic in this chapter: both a traditional and a secular interpretation of Christ. As a study case, it is relevant to the threefold problematic of secularization, hermeneutics, and the symbol, in accordance with the basic concern of these colloquia.

From the early days of this century, we have seen a progressive transformation in interpretations of Christ. At first, and chiefly for pastoral reasons, it was thought necessary to present Christ as a model for modern Man, hence Jesus the worker, Jesus the proletarian, the socialist: in a word, Jesus the Man. The reactions to this trend are well-known: some feared the rationalization and, if you allow a play on words, the "naturalization" of Christ into the realm of Nature and the Human. What was at first mostly a pastoral concern, without the slightest intention of opposing the traditional conception of Christ, became more and more widespread as an idea of the figure of Jesus. His humanity has become so central that through it, and not through his divinity, Jesus seems to have a universal radiance, seems to respond to the deeply felt appeals of those who reject any kind of supernatural Christianity. If, for example, in speaking to Hindus, Buddhists, and secularized Westerners, you speak of Jesus the Son of Man rather than of Christ the Son of God, you will notice the difference.[2]

How do we explain this situation? Does it mean that there have been no interpretations of Christ as Man until now? Certainly not. The difference is not that we are suddenly giving a profane instead of a sacred interpretation—this has been done since the inception of the Christian tradition—but rather that we have applied a radically different hermeneutic to the figure of Christ. This new interpretation, for example, does not deny the resurrection as a profane hermeneutic would, but it does interpret it differently than does a traditional hermeneutic.

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[1] Τίνα λέγουσιν οι ανθρωποι ειναι τον υιον του ανθρωπου; "Quem dicunt homines esse Filium hominis?" Cf. Jn 12:34: "Who is this Son of Man?"

[2] Cf. the interesting sentence of Irenaeus: "He has, therefore, in his work of recapitulation summed up all things. . . . For this reason he calls himself Son of Man" (*Against Heresies* 5.21.1, cited by F. H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967], 402).

Let us try to disentangle the main lines of this change, which lie not so much in the "object" (Jesus) as in the interpreting subject, himself swept along in the current of the times. Using this double example—the "traditional" and the "secular" Christ—I hope to clarify the triple problematic mentioned above: secularization, hermeneutics, and the symbol.

My thesis may be summed up as follows: the process of secularization has led to the *secularization* of hermeneutics, the introduction of *time* as a factor within the hermeneutic process itself. The hermeneutic process then discloses the deepest character of secularization: the presence of the *saeculum*, understood as temporality incarnate, in the very heart of Being and hence of all Reality.

A Double Example

Jesus Christ, Son of God

Ever since Peter's famous response, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," which seems unhesitatingly to affirm Jesus's identity—albeit with nuances[3]—Christian tradition has sought to understand more deeply the meaning of this declaration, the foundation of its belief. The history of this gradual dawning of consciousness provides fascinating material both for our specific topic and for the study of the evolution of Western consciousness toward a fuller understanding of a problem that has always haunted humankind. The theological aspect of this problem is that of the union of the human with the divine; its philosophical aspect, the question of the One and the Many. There is a deep relationship between the εν και πολλα[4] of Plato and the θεος αληθως και ανθρωπος αληθως[5] of Christology. The subject of Christ offers us, in fact, a paradigm for bypassing an exclusively dialectical solution to this problem. The history of Christian thought speaks of a constantly renewed effort to maintain a balance between the two dialectically incompatible facts of reason and revelation: Christ is both Man (hence creature, multiplicity) and God (hence uncreated, the One).[6] Moreover, the science of religions would confirm that ultimately the theologian and the philosopher are concerned with one and the same issue.[7]

The theological problem of Christ consists precisely in finding an intelligible formulation that can maintain unity without falling into pluralism, and diversity without harming identity. In other words, it must neither destroy divinity (which seems unable to mingle with contingency without being contaminated) nor alienate the human (which seems to

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[3] Mt 16:16. I say "with nuances," because Peter's response underlines the messianic role of Christ, employs the ambiguous formula "*Son* of God"—which is at once Jewish, Christian, monotheistic, and Trinitarian—and finally emphasizes the personal and existential character of his confession, "*You are*." Cf. Panikkar, "The Meaning of Christ's Name in the Universal Economy of Salvation," in *Service and Salvation*, Nagpur Theological Conference on Evangelization (Bangalore: J. Pathrapankal, TPI, 1973), 235–63.

[4] "One and the Many."

[5] "Truly God, and truly Man."

[6] Regarding the Absolute, human thought has adopted three approaches: (a) the Absolute is, and there is no room for anything else, therefore the world is mere appearance: the *monistic solution*; (b) the Absolute is, but it has suffered a fall, an error, a degradation, or whatever it may be, and the world is therefore its opposite pole: the *dualistic (or pluralist) solution*; (c) the Absolute is, and within itself, so to speak, there is a rift or a dynamism that allows for the tension and polarity of the other as such: the *adualistic*, advaitic, *or Trinitarian solution*. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *L'experience de Dieu dans la Bible*, in *Les moines chrétiens face aux religions d'Asie*, *Vanves* (Bangalore: Secrétariat AIM, 1975), 29.

[7] Cf. the theologies of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, which revolve around this problem.

become lost if allowed to approach the Divine too closely).[8] Hence the intrinsic connection of Christology with the Trinitarian issue on the one hand, and with anthropology on the other. I would like to discuss this briefly.

The Trinitarian Foundations

In order to preserve the unity of Christ without devaluating either his humanity—or his divinity—in the process, we must discover a certain flexibility at the center of the Divine itself. In other words, there is in God a certain "life" permitting distinction without separation, "pluralism" without plurality; there is in God an "energy," a *dynamis*, a *shakti*, an intelligence—in short, a trinity—that can explain a descent or *avatâra*, a manifestation or epiphany, an incarnation, which leaves divine unity and perfection intact. In the terms used by Christian tradition, then, one could say that only if God is Trinity—if there is a movement at the very heart of Divinity making possible the incarnation of the Son of God through the work and grace of the Holy Spirit—can we explain the orthodox claim that Jesus Christ is God and Man. The central dogma of Christology would not hold up if God were a monolithic block without any internal distinction whatsoever. Without the Trinity, the Incarnation could only be purely illusory, or a violation of divine purity: either Docetism or Patripassianism. That is to say, the alternatives would be monistic absolutism, which makes all of creation (thus also the humanity of Christ) illusory, or ontological pantheism, which makes all existence, including Christ, merely an aspect of the Divine.

Now, in a milieu pervaded by a Judeo-Christian monotheism it is especially difficult to explain Christ. We know that at the beginning of the Christian era, many explanations were offered—either functional (such as the Ebionist idea of adoptionism), or metaphysical (such as the Sabellianist modalism)—all based on the hypothesis of a monopersonal God, called monarchism. It is thus within the horizon of a divine monarchy that we should understand some of the first patristic speculations on the subject of a *logos* as simply the intelligence of the Father in the act of creation and redemption, that is to say, within time. Arianism in its various forms also led to the thought that, in order to safeguard the transcendence and uniqueness of the divine personality, Christ must be reduced to a mere creature.

It was not until the General Councils that some harmony between Trinitarian and Christological formulas was achieved. The definitions of Nicaea[9] and Chal-

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[8] The expression of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) could perhaps serve as a motto expressing this mentality: "Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest similitudo notari quia inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda" [Between the Creator and the creature cannot any likeness be known, that does not imply a greater unlikeness]; see Denz.-Schön. Or again, the Augustinian text of Meister Eckhart: "Tanto autem est aliquid Deo propinquius, quanto terrae, quae 'prope nihil' [cf. Augustine, *Confess.* 12.7.3] est, fuerit remotius" (*Sermo* 10.103) [Something is closer to God insofar as it is farther from earth, which is nearly nothing].

[9] The Latin text from Nicaea in 325 says, "Credimus in unum Deum Patrem.... Et in unum Iesum Christum Filium Dei (unigenitum) qui natus est ex Patre unigenitus, id est ex substantia Patris, Deum ex Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum ex Deo vero, natum non factum, consubstantialem Patri ... qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelo et incarnatus est et inhumanatus est, passus est et resurrexit tertia die, ascendit in caelis ac venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos" [We believe in God the Father Almighty ... And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father ... who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate and became man, who suffered and on the third day rose again, ascended into heaven and will come again to judge both the living and the dead] (*Conciliorum oecumenicorum*

cedon[10] are too well known to need commentary here.[11] Scholastic elaborations defending the transcendence and immutability of God (a God more Hellenic perhaps than Jewish, but in any case the Christian God through the centuries) have also become traditional.[12] The patristic scheme has remained the model, even though problems with it have arisen and grown along with the evolution of Christian reflection.

We might summarize as follows: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the Firstborn and only Son, equal with the Father because he possesses the divine "nature" as the second "person" of the Trinity: God of God, light of light, true God of the true God. There is, in short, no orthodox Christology without its Trinitarian foundations.

The Anthropological Foundations

On the other hand, if Jesus were a simple theophany or just an appendage of the "second person" without a life of his own; if he were not really Man—humanity, in a sense—he could not fulfill his role as Savior, as Messiah; he would not have entered history at all. Discussions were already prevalent in the patristic era, for example, on the nature of Christ's will.[13] Medieval mysticism liked to reflect that God assumed human nature in Christ precisely because there was not and could not be a "human person" in God.[14] If Jesus were an individual human

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decreta, ed. J. Alberigo et al. [Basileae: Herder, 1962], 4, where the textual variants can also be found. Cf. also Denz.-Schön. 125.

[10] The Latin text of the Council of Chalcedon, in 451, says in its *definitio fidei*: "Omnes docemus eundem perfectum in deitate, eundem perfectum in humanitate, Deum vere et hominem vere, eundem ex anima rationale et corpore, consubstantialem Patri secundum deitatem et consubstantialem nobis eundem secundum humanitatem, per omnia nobis similem absque peccato, ante saecula quidem de Patre genitum secundum deitatem, in novissimis autem diebus eundem propter nos et propter salutem nostram ex Maria virgine Dei genetrice secundum humanitatem, unum eundemque Christum Filium Dominum unigenitum, in duabus naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter agnoscendum, nusquam sublata differentia naturarum propter unitionem magisque salva proprietate utriusque naturae et in unam personam atque subsistentiam concurrente, non in duas personas partitum sive divisum, sed eundem Filium unigenitum Deum Verbum Dominum Iesum Christum," op. cit., 62. Cf. Denz.-Schön. 301–2: "We all teach that he [Christ] must be recognized as perfect in his divinity, and perfect in his humanity, truly God and truly Man, with rational soul and body, of the same substance as the Father as to his divinity, of the same substance as our own as to his humanity, completely identical to us but without sin, begotten by the Father as to his divinity before the world was made, and in these last days, for us and our salvation, born of Virgin Mary, mother of God as to his humanity; the one Christ, the Only Son and Lord, in two natures, without confusion, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably; absolutely without eliminating the differences between the two natures because of this union, but rather keeping the characteristics of both, concurring to make one person and one *subsistentia* [permanent substratum], not divided into two persons, but this same Only Begotten Son, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ."

[11] We should also take into account the definitions of the Council of Ephesus in 431. Cf. J. Alberigo, op. cit., 47ff., and Denz.-Schön. 250ff. (and *Suppl.*).

[12] Cf., for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* I. qq. 3; 4; 7; 9; 11.

[13] Cf. the condemnation of the Monothelists ("There is only one will in Christ") by the Third Council of Constantinople in 680–681; Denz.-Schön. 550ff.

[14] Cf. the bold definition of the Council of Quiercy (Oise) in 853: "*Christus Jesus D. N., sicut nullus homo est, fuit vel erit, cuius natura in illo assumpta non fuerit*" [As there is no Man, nor has been, nor will be, whose nature has not been taken by our Lord Jesus Christ upon himself]; Denz.-Schön. 624). Karl Rahner is perhaps not completely accurate when he says that for the Western mind "die Idee der 'Annahme' der ganzen Menschheit in der individuellen menschlichen Wirklichkeit Jesu ziemlich ferne liegt" [the idea of Christ taking the whole humanity upon his own individual human reality is quite an

person, the Christian could not identify with Christ, and he or she could not realize his or her own divinization in forming a single Body with Christ. If Christ were an individual, we could not understand the Eucharist as the paschal presence of the risen Lord, nor could we explain how the vast number of Masses and consecrated hosts do not likewise multiply the body of Christ. Furthermore, if Christ were an individual in the modern sense of the word, redemption could not happen at the same level—the universal level—as the fall. Christ, the new Adam, should be a human paradigm like the first Man: where in the first Adam all have sinned, in the second, all find salvation.[15]

Jesus Christ had traditionally been understood as perfect God and perfect Man. It was said to be the challenge of faith to the human mind that these two facts were presented as "revelation," but that any explanation, any formulation of what human reason cannot conceive[16] was left to the work of theology and the care of theological authority. This was the traditional way of thinking, persisting even to this day.[17]

Jesus Christ, Son of Man

The traditional interpretation does not, however, deny the humanity of Christ. The title "Son of Man," though it has a special Jewish meaning, has always been a constant reminder of his humanity.[18] Such balance between the Human and the Divine has not always been

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alien concept) (*Sacramentum mundi* [Freiburg: Herder, 1968], *sub voce* "Jesus Christus," col. 931). This is true from the perspective of a sort of textbook Scholasticism and is a valuable sociological observation, but one constantly encounters the opposite point of view as well. Cf. for example: "Secundum, notandum quod Deus Verbum assumpsit naturam non personam hominis. Circa quod notanda sunt quinquae: primo quidem quod natura est nobis aequaliter communis cum Christo univoce. . . . Beda [see *Homilia 7 in die Nativitatis Domini* (PL 94.39)] sic ait: '*non* invideo Christo facto Deo, quoniam et ego, si volo, possum fieri secundum ipsum'" (Eckhart, *In Iohannem* 11.1 [*Lateinische Werke*; Heidelberg: Kohlhammer; Berlin 1936], IV, no. 289): "Secondly, we must mark that God the Word took Man's nature, not person. About this, we must mark five points. First, that we share with Christ the same nature univocally. . . . Beda says in fact: I do not envy the deified Christ, because I too—if I will—can be changed in his likeness." We find the same idea throughout Eckhart's works; cf. *Sermo* 6.2, with the notes given by Eckhart or perhaps by Suso in *Theologia Deutsch*, etc. Cf. also the possible enrichment of the theology of redemption with the idea of *karman*. Cf. my remarks in "La loi du *karma* et la dimension historique de l'homme," *La Théologie de l'Histoire, Herméneutique et Eschatologie*, Acta of the Colloquium organized by the Istituto di Filosofia, Roma, ed. E. Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1971), 205–30.

[15] Cf. Rom 5:12ff.

[16] Cf. the text of the First Vatican Council in 1870: "Praeter ea, ad quae naturalis ratio pertingere potest, credenda nobis proponuntur mysteria in Deo abscondita, quae nisi revelata divinitus, innotescere non possunt" (Denz.-Schön. 3015): "Beside some things that natural reason could attain by itself, to our faith are offered mysteries which are hidden in God, and which could not become known if God did not reveal them."

[17] Cf., from Vatican II, *Constitutio Dei Verbum* I.5 and I.6, which also cites the parallel reference from Vatican I (Denz.-Schön. 3005).

[18] The most exact translation of the Aramaic phrase *bar-nasha* is not the literal υιος του ανθρωπου but rather, simply, ανθρωπος (in German: *Menschenkind*, as O. Cullmann notes in his Christology), in the cosmic and sacred sense of Man, divine yet fully human. I wonder if we might reconcile this meaning of Man with that of the Vedic *puruṣa*. Since St. Ignatius of Antioch added τω υιω ανθρωπου και Υιω Θεου (*filius hominis et Filius Dei*), *Epist. ad Ephes.* 20.2 (PG 5.661), to his commentary on Rom 1:3, the expression can be used to designate the full humanity of Jesus Christ. We should recall that of the nearly seventy times that the expression appears in the Gospels, it is always spoken by Jesus himself and not by his interlocutors. For a comprehensive treatment of the strictly theological question, cf. F.

maintained—in the way theologians might wish—in the actual devotions of the Christian people. Today we are witnessing a radical change of viewpoint. From this changed perspective, which encompasses the old as well as the new, we would like to present the following reflections in two parts, paralleling those of the first section.

The Traditional Foundations

Since late medieval *Devotio moderna*, the humanity of Christ has been placed in relief as never before. Later, psychology—when it was not being merely physiological—seized hold of popular piety for its own purposes.[19] The balance began to waver, but in any case, divinity was not denied, and the interpretation was still traditional. The humanity of Christ was fundamental, not only to the orthodox explanation of Christ as the "image of the invisible God,"[20] but also to Christian life at all levels. In Christian terms, one cannot have any relationship with God except through Christ, the "way,"[21] the "sole mediator"[22] (not to be confused with an intermediary): "Philip, whoever sees me sees the Father."[23] The iconolatric dimension is essential to religion.[24] In Christianity, this icon is one and the same, in the being of the Father and in the world: the unity of the *Logos* incarnate.[25]

For centuries, in the West, neither the existence of God nor that of Jesus could be cast into doubt without weighty social repercussions. To be sure, since ancient times there have been those who would doubt the divinity of Christ, and others who would deny him true humanity. They give "heterodox" interpretations of Christ, but still accept the traditional rules of the game, so to speak.[26] A purely secular hermeneutic of Christ, such as we will describe, was not even conceivable until today.

H. Borsch, *The Son of Man*, op. cit.

[19] P. Debognie speaks of a "*realisme psychologique de leur sens religieux*" as one of the characteristics of the fifteenth-century *devotio moderna*, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957), *sub hac voce*. Nevertheless, we must wait until later centuries to witness the growth of devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Precious Blood, the Five Wounds, etc.

[20] Col 1:15.

[21] Cf. Jn 14:16.

[22] Cf. 1 Tim 2:5.

[23] Jn 14:9.

[24] Cf. my *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 11n19. Now in Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

[25] Cf. "Deus enim cognoscendo se, cognoscit omnem creaturam. . . . Sed quia Deus uno actu et se et omnia intelligit, unicum Verbum eius est expressivum non solum Patris, sed etiam creaturarum" [God, in fact, by knowing himself knows all created things. . . . Since God, by one act [of his intellect], knows both himself and everything, his unique Word expresses not only the Father but also the creatures] (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.* I, q. 34, a. 3). Cf. the commentaries of the mystics on Job 33:14 and Ps 61:12. Cf. also the affirmations of Meister Eckhart: "Eodem et pari amore, quo se ipsum amat, nos amat. . . . Amor, quo nos diligit, est ipse Spiritus sanctus" [By the same and self love by which He loves himself, He loves us. . . . The love by which He loves us is the Holy Spirit), in *Sermo* 6.1.55; and also: "Deus . . . non intensius diligit unum aut aliquid aut omnia quam omnia unum, sed nec se ipsum quam aliud quodlibet" [God does not love the one thing, or something, or everything, more intensely than Himself, nor Himself more than whatever thing], in *Sermo* 10.108.

[26] The following extreme case occurred in the Basque region during the early months of the Spanish Civil War, 1936: a Protestant minister was trying to convince the local workers—who declared themselves Christians despite the fact that they fought against the Catholic Church (burning churches, killing priests, etc.)—that the Gospels and Christianity were on their side, that it was their Christian

The Modern Foundations

We have indicated how the mystery of Christ led Christian thought to modify Jewish monotheism. Now I would like to suggest that this same mystery is in the process of modifying Western and traditional Christian anthropology. Although several centuries were needed before the pronouncements of Chalcedon were possible, it has taken even longer to clarify the anthropological consequences, which have been latent until now because the mystery of Christ was subordinated—rightly or wrongly—to the problem of God.

Today, the problem of the unity of Christ is still central, but this unity is sought not in an "objective" way (as the union of God and Man), so much as in a "subjective" way (as the union of Christ with Men). Obviously, if we are concerned about this particular unity and not, for example, about Socrates's unity with us, it is because we consider that with Christ there is relationship of a special kind—even though it may be the model of our relationship with all humankind. Human brotherhood is not based here on a common divine sonship, but on our common brotherhood with Christ.[27]

The problem of the historical Christ and the so-called Christ of faith, the hypotheses used to explain the continuity between Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Lord, the discussions about our consciousness of Christ and its evolution in time, and so on, are some of the familiar issues in Christology and contemporary theology that will provide the context for our considerations.[28]

Little by little, from motives that were seen from within as pastoral and from outside as tactical, the human aspect of Christ was emphasized: his brotherhood with Men, his attitude toward the suffering and the poor, his life of service to others, and so on. It seems that, with

right to do what they had done, and so on. The people turned on him immediately and would not let him continue, saying, "We have left the one true Church, outside of which there is no salvation, and now you want us to return in a heretical sect?" Cf. also André Malraux, *Anti-mémoires*, trans. T. Kilmartin (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 15:

> He had made the pilgrimage on foot. As chairman of various charitable organizations, he had had no difficulty in obtaining an audience with the pope. He had found himself with a score of the faithful in a room in the Vatican. He was by no means shy, but the pope was the pope, and he was a Catholic: they had all knelt down, the Holy Father had come in, they had kissed his slipper, and they had been dismissed.
>
> After recrossing the Tiber, filled with holy indignation fanned by the sacrilegious multitude round the fountains, the indifferent shadows on the streets without sidewalks, the antique pillars, the red plush tea shops, my grandfather rushed off to pack his bags, and left by the first express. On his return, his Protestant friends believed he was ripe for conversion.
>
> "A man doesn't change his religion at my age."
>
> Thereafter, cut off from the Church but not from Christ, he attended mass every Sunday outside the building, standing in the nettles in one of the angles made by the junction of the nave and the transept, following the service from memory and straining his ears at the stained-glass windows to catch the frail sound of the handbell announcing the Elevation.

[27] Cf. the moving confession of R. Garaudy in his "Il a inauguré un nouveau mode d'existence," in the special issue *Les visages de Jésus-Christ*, in *Lumière et Vie* 22, no. 112 (April–May 1973): 13–32, where he quotes X. Léon-Dufour: "Si je veux parler à Jésus comme à une personne individuelle, je ne l'atteins que dans le Jésus de l'avant Pâques" [If I want to speak to Jesus as to an individual person I can only do so with the Jesus before Easter]. The entire issue is a fine example of current endeavors to reach a new understanding of the secularized interpretation of Christ.

[28] A study of the various contributions to the General Assemblies of the Ecumenical Council of Churches would by itself furnish material to illustrate this double mentality. On this subject, see the volumes of *The Ecumenical Review*.

each effort to present Christ as Man, he emerged more purified and even more glorious; his true character was cast more strongly into relief. Slowly, the distinction between interior and exterior views blurred. Christ won his independence, so to speak, from the clerical milieu that seemed to have monopolized him. This state of affairs is not something that just happened recently: it has run parallel to the entire process of secularization itself.

Traditionally, the bond that unites us to Christ and makes redemption possible is his divinity: only because Christ is God can he redeem and reconcile us among ourselves. Today, on the other hand, his very humanity gives rise to this bond, which makes Christ effectively present among us not only as human but also as savior, liberator, and even redeemer.

Some say that human, or even economic development has been the Christian contribution to peoples of other religions. They would have us believe that Christianity is not even a religion.

Identity is still the fundamental question, only this time it is not a metaphysical problem but a functional one within a sociological context. On the one hand, Christ should be the historical Jesus, and on the other, he should in some way be the risen Lord, that is to say, a living reality present among us—not just an idea. More than ever, the famous "contemporaneity" of Christ comes to light.

We might note here several characteristics of this modern Christ. He is, first of all, the prototype of true love, real, incarnate; not a general, faceless, "monastic" love leading to the *fuga mundi*, but an efficacious, even a pragmatic love, one that is powerless to do anything but love. Jesus is the model of one who is concerned with this world and its problems: he suffers because he cannot resolve them. He is involved here unto death. He is the "revolutionary par excellence": he is not afraid to point out disagreeable truths to the powerful, whether they are representatives of God or of Caesar. Nevertheless, he does not take part in subversive movements, knowing full well that revolution must be much more profound. Friend of sinners, he does not forget his responsibilities to ordinary people, nor is he afraid to frequent the homes of the rich. He does not separate the quotidian from the religious life—yet he expects this living practice to be so pure that he becomes violent when he sees abuses committed in the name of religion. This is Christ the "demythicizer," the "iconoclast," the "revolutionary"—and we could add all the other epithets heard these days.[29]

Curiously enough, everyone wants Christ on their side. Of course, we are told, he was a child of his times and spoke the language of his contemporaries, so we should concentrate on essentials and understand that he left the problem of purifying his language to the passage of time. So the medieval Scholastics tell us that, since he spoke to the *rudi et idiotae*, he used parables and metaphors, though he well knew how to express himself in metaphysical, or at least philosophically exact terms. The mystics remind us that there is a hidden and superior significance in his words, and theologians speak to us of multiple meanings. Modern writers repeat that Jesus respected the religious jargon of his epoch in order not to distract from his central message of justice, peace, and love. To the Middle Ages he was a metaphysician; in subsequent centuries he was the supreme monarch of the kingdom; and even today he has become a revolutionary: he is a Man for all times, always actual. Consciously or unconsciously,

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[29] "From the point of view of historical tradition and Church hierarchy, there is a gap between the Church of today and the acceptability of the concept of Christian revolution. Yet we feel that, in essence, there is no dichotomy between the true values of Christianity and the need for social revolution today. Jesus Christ himself, whom we believe to be the Saviour of mankind, was the spokesman of the downtrodden and oppressed in society," says the report of a seminar sponsored by the Institute for Christian Social Scientists, held in Bangalore, April 24–29, 1975; cf. *Religion and Society* 22, no. 3 (September 1975): 68–69. I chose this text in particular because it was approved by a group that can hardly be accused of being radical or "revolutionary."

therefore, one applies a hermeneutical discrimination. This is what we will consider in the following section.

"This Jesus"—an expression from Acts[30]—may be considered merely human, whether because one believes that there is no God, or because one does not think it necessary to compare him to the Messiah. This Jesus has nothing but history for his credentials: he has inspired people to surpass themselves—despite crimes committed in his name—and, we are told, continues to inspire people completely outside of any sacred, church, or religious framework.[31] Nothing is lost, we are assured, by "de-mythicizing," "de-theologizing," and "de-kerygmatizing" Christ: on the contrary, he is thus purified of the excretions of time, he becomes more living, even more worthy of belief than ever. He is the delegate of God, the one who makes God really present, and so tender, thus rendering the hypothesis of a transcendent divinity completely superfluous. Christ is so fully Man that he becomes the symbol of Man, of plenitude—that is, of liberation. The true Christian, we are further assured, is the authentic humanist.[32] And because the disciple is not greater than his master, one who follows Christ consistently must take the revolution even to the very heart of the church.

A Triple Problem

I want to emphasize that this section treats a single question from three different angles rather than three independent problems. Had the latter been the case, our study would have taken different directions and would, moreover, be endless.[33] I would like therefore, in dwelling on the example of Christ, to study the secularization of hermeneutics by showing

1. How a hermeneutic becomes secularized
2. What this means for hermeneutics itself
3. How, within this process of rupture, symbol remains the invariant

Secularized Hermeneutics

What is meant by a "secularized hermeneutic"? Let us proceed in an orderly fashion.

a. Hermeneutics can mean either all interpretation, or the science that considers the principles upon which all interpretation rests, or finally, it can mean that interpretation that

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[30] Cf. Acts 1:11.

[31] "Es wäre aber ein schweres Missverständnis, wollte man es als bloßen 'Zufall' ansehen, dass Jesus, der Zimmermannsohn, das Evangelium verkündet hat und zum *salvator mundi*, zum Erlöser der Welt geworden ist. Er muss eine Persönlichkeit von begnadetem Ausmaß gewesen sein, dass er imstande war, die allgemeine, wenn auch unbewusste Erwartung seiner Zeit so vollkommen auszudrücken und darzustellen. Niemand anderer hätte der Träger einer solchen Botschaft sein können als eben dieser Mensch Jesus" [It would be a great misunderstanding, if we thought that just by chance did Jesus, the carpenter's son, proclaim the gospel and become the World Savior. He must have had an exceptionally outstanding personality, if he was able to express and display the general—even unconscious—expectations of his time in such a perfect way. Nobody else could have been the bearer of such a message, except this very person, Jesus] (C. G. Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, ed. A. Jaffé (Freiburg: Walter Olten, 1972), 215.

[32] Cf. in this connection the discussions preceding and following the Second World War regarding humanism and Christian humanism. Cf. also my study "La superación del humanismo," in *Humanismo y Cruz* (Madrid: Rialp, 1963), 178–253. Now in Volume III, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

[33] The example of Christ is not without interest in trying to understand parallel movements in other cultures. Today, for instance, we are seeing attempts to interpret the Buddha in Marxist terms, and to interpret the Hindú Gods in a secular sense.

knows itself to be neither totally objectifiable nor merely subjective, but which realizes the extent of its validity precisely because it has become aware of its own limits.[34]

I prefer to use the word in the third, more restricted sense, but the fact that in current literature it is utilized without such distinctions will justify a certain flexibility in its application here.

b. Sacred hermeneutics is the interpretation of facts or events in their sacredness, that is, without reducing them to a world governed by rational or profane parameters. The sacred or *fanum* is dialectically opposed to the *pro-fanum*.

Sacred hermeneutics is an attempt to interpret according to principles that themselves belong to the order of the sacred, that is, to an order irreducible to the profane; or more precisely, to an order that, without denying the principle of noncontradiction or the laws of the empirical world, is not limited by their presuppositions in recognizing laws and behaviors arising from the world we call sacred.

One can hardly simplify this explanation any further. Any effort to remove sacred hermeneutics from sacred principles is equivalent to destroying the sacred element itself. It could be said, then, that sacred hermeneutics is not valid, however: something that does not recognize itself as sacred cannot be defined as "sacred" hermeneutics. By this, I mean that sacred hermeneutics is not comprehensible through another hermeneutic. Rather, it is an irreducible genre of hermeneutics itself.

Two examples will clarify this point. When interpreting a human, cosmic, or divine fact from the *purāns* or the mythical stories of India, we are not limited to giving a rational, much less a "scientific" explanation. Of course, we follow a scheme of causality, but we do not limit it to the empirical world or physical causes. Though following the principle of sufficient reason, we do not restrict the "reasons" to rational evidence alone. Our explanation remains within the very world in which these stories live, a world in which Man is not the only intelligent being, where bodies do not follow empirical laws alone, where time is not exclusively homogeneous and linear, and so on.[35] Our interpretation presupposes an entire world, a universe of discourse with its rules and laws, though it may be different from the historical, physical, and cosmological world of the contemporary West.[36] The interpretation is made within and for this sacred world itself.[37]

A second typical example would be that of the traditional status of Christian theology as *scientia sacra*, as *fides quaerens intellectum*, as the progress of intelligibility within the realm of Christian belief. Theology does not seek to "rationalize" faith, but to explicate and make it comprehensible in a universe of discourse given by faith itself. A genuine hermeneutic of the

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[34] The bibliography on hermeneutics is immense. Cf. the fine résumés by G. Ebeling in *RGG*, K. Lehmann in *Sacramentum mundi*, and H.-G. Gadamer in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (ed. H. Ritter), as well as the volumes of these very *Colloquia* (ed. E. Castelli), etc.

[35] Cf., for example, the difference between "the Gods' time" and "Man's time" in the *brāhmaṇas*, where Prajāpati takes a thousand years to accomplish the same rite that takes Men one hour (*SB* X.4.4.1ff.); or in the *purāṇas* where thirty minutes of the Gods are the equivalent to thousands of human years (*Brah. Vaiv. Pur.* II.13.51).

[36] Cf. the aetiological myths in *SB* II.4.2.1ff; *Markaeya Pur.* III; *Brah. Vaiv. Pur.* I.9.49ff; etc.

[37] Ultimately it is impossible to be in two worlds at once. But one can live within a personal horizon that embraces more than a single cultural world. The present-day reaction, in contemporary India, to the phenomenon of the miracle in the case of Satya Sai Baba, for example, is revealing. For some, the miracle is a fact that, like the sunrise, needs no further explanation. For others, a consistent and convincing explanation exists, an explanation that many in India would call "scientific." Finally, some reject the whole business as a fraud, precisely because there is no convincing rational explanation. What is interesting here is the co-existence of these worldviews even among the devotees of Sai Baba.

sacred, that is, of a sacred object, cannot be made except by means of a hermeneutic that is itself sacred. *Sacra theologia* presupposes faith as a point of departure, indeed as an indispensable tool. To submit a sacred object to a profane hermeneutic would mean to commit a methodological error as great as trying to experience the sound of an orchestra with the eyes alone. Similarly, a geometrical interpretation of a physical phenomenon may be true and convincing from the point of view of geometry, but hardly sufficient from a purely physical point of view, since the fundamental specificity of physical material completely escapes geometrical description. Likewise, a profane, exclusively rational hermeneutic of a sacred object would not know how to respond to the demands of a sacred interpretation, which alone could give a satisfactory explanation of the object in question. I wonder just how far the attraction of the exact sciences has thus influenced the Western attitude toward the sacred? How does one know that an object is sacred, if not already through an appropriate hermeneutic?

c. Profane hermeneutics thematically excludes—without necessarily denying—the categories of the sacred, and limits itself to giving explanations in the terms of a "rational" world and of "empirical," that is, sensory witness. Profane hermeneutics limits intelligibility to that which is directly or indirectly evident to reason, or to that which is plausible within a universe of discourse considered rational. The difference between the *rational* and the *reasonable* nevertheless remains vague and uncertain because, in a word, the particular hermeneutic we use determines just what the difference between the sacred and the profane will be. Whereas a sacred hermeneutic, for example, would try to explain a "miracle," a profane hermeneutic would give no explanation at all. Nevertheless, the fact of accepting or rejecting the miracle gives eminence neither to the sacred nor to the profane hermeneutic, but to a presupposed meta-hermeneutic.[38]

The development of the science of apologetics is an interesting case in point.[39] Apologetics does not aim to "prove" the contents of faith, but to give an interpretation that makes those contents "believable"—faith being above reason, not opposed to it.[40]

The conflict arises as a question of jurisdiction, that is, in deciding whether a fact belongs to one hermeneutic or to the other. The problem is more serious than a simple difference between interpretations of a fact, because the consciousness, or knowledge of the "fact" itself, is already a function of the hermeneutic employed.[41] Ultimately, the acceptance of two hermeneutics that divide reality into two planes is already the fruit of a given (preexisting) hermeneutic.

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[38] Cf. a typical example: "Wenn ich z.B. den Glauben an die Erbsünde nichts weiter aussagen lasse als dies, dass der Mensch von Natur nicht so sei, wie er sein soll, so lege ich ihm nur eine allgemeine rationalistische Wahrheit in den Mund, eine Wahrheit, die jeder Mensch weiß" [If I, e.g., do not consider the tenet of original sin as anything more than this: that Man by nature is not what he should be, then I let it express a general, rational truth—a truth that anyone knows] (L. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1969), 7–8, preface to the first edition. Feuerbach understands "truth" as "historical truth." Thus, when he interprets what for him is the Christian tenet of original sin, he can only interpret it in the "specific" sense of a historical truth, i.e., according to what is for him the "literal" meaning of the Bible—and thus is obliged to reject its religious meaning.

[39] A similar case would be that of "fundamental theology"; cf. my article "Metatheology or Diacritical Theology as Fundamental Theology," *Concilium* 6, no. 5 (June 1969): 21–27.

[40] Cf. the text from Vatican I cited above. Note that the celebrated category of the "supernatural" belongs only to the order of knowledge, though in what is basically a realistic epistemology.

[41] "So ist das Wunder dem Wundergläubigen nichts der Vernunft Widersprechendes, vielmehr etwas ganz Natürliches, als eine sich von selbst ergebende Folge der göttliche Allmacht, die gleichfalls für ihn eine sehr natürliche Vorstellung ist" [So, for those who believe in miracles, a miracle is not against reason: it is, indeed, something absolutely natural, an obvious effect of God's omnipotence, and a very natural concept to them, as well], says Feuerbach, op. cit., p. 6.

d. Secular hermeneutics (or "secularized hermeneutics," if you prefer) can, on the other hand, be sacred or profane, since it can be applied equally to either world. By secular hermeneutics I mean an approach that presupposes that the *temporal dimension* is constitutive of Being—a dimension therefore irreplaceable and *ultimate*. The phenomenon of secularization, in my opinion, comes from a much deeper level than would a mere reaction against a certain "religious" conception of reality. What makes secularization an important phenomenon is the new degree of consciousness that seems to have awakened with special keenness in our times, one that recognizes time as a factor so fundamentally constitutive of all reality that nothing remains untouched by temporality. Without temporality, Being would disappear. Borrowing Aristotelian categories, we could say that time is not accidental to but identical with substance.

Temporality is transcendental in the Scholastic sense, and an "existential" as much as an *Existenzial* in the Heideggerian sense. There is not, therefore, any being that is not temporal. Being, qua Being, is temporality. To attribute atemporality to any being whatsoever would be the fruit of pure abstraction—which is itself temporal. This, I believe, is the fundamental intuition underlying secularization,[42] from which all the rest follows.

Secularization takes the *saeculum*, that is, the temporal world, seriously in the extreme.[43] To the secular mentality, the world is not a passing appearance, a revolving *saṃsāra*, an illusory apparition, a place of transition, a fleeting shadow: it cannot be abolished without falling into nihilism.[44]

The terrestrial city is the human city, and is in fact the only real city. Life within temporality is the true human life, and the *saeculum*, the *aiōn*, the *āyus*, the temporal passage of the cosmos is the true world, the world that *is*. The *saeculum* is the reality, and therefore ultimate.[45]

The secular mentality denies the existence of an ontological transcendence, and therefore transtemporal eternity, because, believing in the radically temporal character of Being and hence of consciousness, it can neither admit nor conceive anything outside of the all-encompassing temporality. But inevitably this secular mentality does not deny the mystery of immanence, nor can it negate an apophatic ontic transcendence; it cannot reject the idea that "within" Being, which is fundamentally temporal, there may "dwell" a tempiternal core, a divine center.[46] Faced with Nothingness outside of Being, an utter "Beyond," it can only keep silent. It cannot oppose the mystical intuition of an interior realm, of a *saṃsāra* that is *nirvāṇa*,[47] of a Word that expresses the Silence of another dimension—not of another

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[42] Cf. my *Worship and Secular Man* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 9–13, where I propose this interpretation of secularization.

[43] The word *saeculum*, probably of Etruscan origin, comes directly from the Latin *sero, serere* (whence *semen*), to plant, to sow, and hence to produce, engender, scatter, implant. From this comes generation, race, hence the age of one (human) generation, thus epoch, age (cf. the Greek *aiōn* and the Sanskrit *āyus*), century (French *siècle*). As is well known, the Hebrew *cholam* means both world and time. Cf. 1 Cor 1:20 and 3:18–19 where the parallel *aiōn*-κοσμος (*saeculum-mundum* in the *Vulgate*) suggests an interesting synonymy. The world is constitutively temporal. Cf. also 1 Cor 11:6–8 where *aiōn* means κοσμος.

[44] The Buddhist intuition could perhaps be summed up by saying that Non-Being (to which reflective thought necessarily leads us) does not exist: Non-Being *is* not.

[45] It would be important to compare this "secular" vision of the world with the Indic notion in which time (*kāla*) is considered to be at the heart of all reality. Cf., for example, *AV* XIX.53, 54.

[46] For a description of the experience of tempiternity, see my contribution "Le temps circulaire" to the Colloquium organized by E. Castelli, *Temps et Alienation* (Paris: Aubier, 1975), 233–46.

[47] Cf. Nāgārjuna, *Mādhyamika-kārikā* XXV.19.

Being—within the one Reality.[48] The fundamental intuition of secularization is that nothing can be if it is not temporal, but this does not necessarily mean that the temporality that is "within" everything that *is*, and hence coextensive "with" everything that is, *must be* therefore everything that is. This intuition says that Being is all that is, but it simply cannot speak of that which *is* not. There is a deep correspondence here with the mystical. Not only is there a mystical aspect of the secular, but there is also a secular mysticism.

Be that as it may, secular interpretation is the explanation of a fact in terms of its historico-temporal coordinates, because it assumes that only within these coordinates is the desired intelligibility to be found.

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Returning now to our example, I have suggested that the hermeneutic of Christ has become secularized. Why? Simply because the interpreters wanted to make Christ intelligible to a secularized society; and second, because those who undertook the hermeneutic task were themselves secularized. The function of hermeneutics is to render a fact intelligible with the tools of intelligibility at its disposal at the time.

The secular interpretation of Christ leads us to see the reality, and hence the intelligibility of Christ, in terms of the historico-temporal situation. His divinity is not explicitly denied, just because it is not clear what it would be about. This is the only way to make him real: otherwise he would vanish, suffering the same fate as the Gods, as "God," disappearing from the horizon of our consciousness.

In other words, the secular interpretation of Christ does not intend to deny Christ but to save him, so to speak, from the wreckage of all our "unchangeable" values. Herein lies its mythic continuity with traditional hermeneutics, as we shall see shortly.

From the perspective of traditional hermeneutics, secular interpretation seems to want to destroy Christ. Seen from within, however, this is not the case. Today, we have many examples of this "secular" Christ, not only in discussions carried on in specialized journals, but also in the reactions of the man in the street to the spectacular portrayals of Christ in novels, in films, and on stage. Consider, for instance, the case of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. While some consider it heterodox or even blasphemous, others cannot understand why the film is not recognized as a profession of the most traditional faith, only in a modern idiom.[49]

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[48] Cf. the various contributions in *The Word out of Silence* (special issue), *CrossCurrents* (Spring 1975).

[49] Cf., for instance, the following verses from *Jesus Christ Superstar* (libretto by Tim Rice, music by A. L. Webber):

> I remember when this whole thing began,
> No talk of God, then—we called you a man. . . .
> And believe me, my admiration for you hasn't died,
> But every word you say today
> Gets twisted round some other way.

So says Judas at the very beginning of the opera, with a deep and tragic faith, while further on, the crowd cries out:

> Christ, you know I love you,
> Did you see I waved?
> I believe in you and God,
> So tell me I'm saved.

Or the words of Mary Magdalene regarding Jesus's "divinity" when she sings:

> I don't know how to love him. . . .

Does this mean that the two hermeneutics can legitimately coexist? How can we resolve the conflict between them? Rather than answering such immense questions, we would just like to clear the ground for future work, guided by our example. This means that we must question the value of hermeneutics itself, and clarify the proper limits of the question.

The Hermeneutics of a Hermeneutic

Truth is always hidden in the interpretation. Through interpretation we have access to the truth, but interpretation also veils the truth from us. All *inter*-pretation is an intermediary that transmits light to us, but also refracts and limits it.

Now, either the questioning of the validity of a hermeneutic is intrinsic to it, or one should apply another hermeneutic to the first—one that is accepted as normative for formulating this question and answering it. In the first case, we would only be dividing the hermeneutic question into two: interpretation of a fact and critical reflection on the interpretation. We will return to this presently.

With the second alternative, however, we have only displaced the question, and ultimately returned to the first. In fact, can there ever be a "hermeneutic of hermeneutics"? I believe not, since, if all hermeneutics needed another hermeneutic, some third "hermeneutic" would then be necessary in order to interpret our hermeneutic theory, *et sic ad infinitum*.[50] We can have the hermeneutics of a particular hermeneutic and, at a higher level of abstraction, the hermeneutics of existing hermeneutics, but not a hermeneutic of hermeneutics per se, that is, of every hermeneutic, since whatever hermeneutic we use to interpret hermeneutics would also be a part of hermeneutics itself—clearly a contradictory state of affairs.

On the other hand, a hermeneutic fulfills its function of interpreting only so long as it remains uncontested. The moment that a hermeneutic is presented as *interpretanda*, it can no longer interpret without first being justified. But the innocence of it is irreversibly lost. The "unquestionable" is such because it cannot be called into question. The moment it is questioned meaningfully, it ceases to be "unquestioned" and therefore also ceases to be "unquestionable." Theoretically, anything can be questioned, except that which makes each question a question. We may inquire about any-*thing*, but we may not ask about asking in

> I don't know how take this,
> I don't see why he moves me:
> He's a man, he's just a man....
> He's just one more,
> He scares me so.

Or again, Judas, after having betrayed Jesus:
> I don't know how to love him,
> I don't know why he moves me:
> He's a man—he's just a man,
> He's not a king—he's just the same
> As anyone I know.
> He scares me so.

Of particular interest here are the affirmations of Mary and Judas, who attempt to convince themselves that Jesus is human, precisely because they "fear" that he may be more than "just a man."

[50] Cf. E. Castelli, *Herméneutique de l'herméneutique*, in *Ermeneutica e Tradizione* (Rome: Istituto di Studi Filosofici, 1963), 1.

general, without thereby destroying asking itself.[51] We may ask, "For what reason?," but we cannot ask, "For *for what reason?*" without making the first "For what reason?" into a "reason," into a *thing* to be investigated, and no longer a question. We always ask about some-*thing*. Even if we ask why we question, we are asking about a thing: the inquisitive nature of the human being. But we cannot ask, "Why are we asking about asking?" without destroying the previous question by turning it into an "asked"; it is no longer the active, but the passive part of the phenomenon, so to speak. We have to stop somewhere, and it is on this stopping point that all other questions depend.

Thus, although a hermeneutic of hermeneutics is not possible, it is certainly possible to demand an interpretation, that is, an explication and in a certain sense a justification of a particular hermeneutic process. Every concrete hermeneutic should be prepared to be "hermeneuticized" if someone questions it; but hermeneutics as such is not "hermeneuticizable," since "interpretation" in that case would become, instead, the "interpreted."[52]

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We can now examine *in concreto* the justification and value of secular hermeneutics, and in particular the secular hermeneutic of Christ.

In an attempt to sum up this extremely complex problematic, the example of Christ will serve both as basis and as point of reference. The specific point of view from which we may approach and understand Christ should be the reality of Christ, which is already a part of our interpretation. The problematic has been discerned, and henceforth the "hermeneutic circle" will be carefully taken into consideration.

A methodological problem presents itself immediately: Should we adopt a diachronic method or a synchronic one? Should we study the evolution and history of the problem, or the structures as they present themselves to us today?

I do not doubt that a structuralist presentation of the different versions and interpretations of the myth of Jesus would be fascinating: it would offer us an indispensable overview as far as a description of the problem goes, but it would not suffice for an understanding of the problem.

Be that as it may, our problem has been simplified, since we only want to inquire about the present state of secular hermeneutics, with the help of our particular example.

Now, in order to simplify things further, we will assume a perspective that can claim a certain historical priority: the orthodox or traditional Christian point of view. By situating ourselves from the outset at a specific "point of departure," we will be able to avoid other problems and proceed directly to our primary concern: the secularization of hermeneutics. There are, it seems to me, several ways to discuss the problem.

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[51] Cf. E. Betti, *Teoria generale dell'interpretazione*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1955), and *Di una teoria generale dell'interpretazione* (Milan, 1957).

[52] "Il semble … que vous avez voulu dire qu'il y a quelque chose de plus que l'herméneutique … et c'est le peril de l'herméneutique d'être un discours sur le discours" [It looks like we tried to say that there is something more than hermeneutics … and there is the risk, for hermeneutics, to become a talking about talking], notes P. Ricoeur, in response to and agreement with my contribution, *Sur l'herméneutique de la tradition dans l'hindouisme* to the Colloquium organized by E. Castelli, *Ermeneutica e tradizione*, 366–67. The previous year, Ricoeur had written, "Bien plus, il n'y a pas d'herméneutique générale, c'est-à-dire de theorie generale de l'interpretation, de canon général pour l'exégèse: il y a seulement des théories herméneutiques séparées et opposées" [More than that, a General Hermeneutics does not exist, i.e., a general theory of interpretation, a general canon for exegesis; there are only—different and opposite—hermeneutic theories], in *Herméneutique et réflexion. Demitizzazione e immagine*, ed. E. Castelli (Padova: CEDAM, 1962), 21.

The Way of Translation

The hermeneutic criterion here is simple. If the new interpretation agrees with the older one, that is, if the new can be reduced to the old, then we can say that the modern interpretation is equally good and valid.

This approach clearly considers the older interpretation as the paradigm, which is fitting, since there exists no other standard. But it thus considers the traditional understanding to be absolute in a certain sense, which contradicts the very idea of interpretation. If interpretation is necessary, it is because a fact is not pure or self-evident, since it requires an intermediary in order to be intelligible. If an interpretation is to be interpretation, it cannot claim absolute identification with the thing interpreted without becoming superfluous. Interpretation is such precisely because the subject-object relation is not completely transparent.

One thing is certain: if we maintain the absolute validity of the older interpretation, the modern one will remain unacceptable until we find the key to translating it into the first. The history of orthodoxy in all the religious traditions of humanity could provide us with relevant examples and lessons whose importance should not be underestimated.[53] In short, if we succeed in making a faithful translation of one interpretation into another, the problem is solved; but the problem presents itself anew whenever such a translation does not exist or is not thought as possible. Must we then reject the new interpretation?

We should also mention the subtle evasion of withholding judgment, supposedly in the hope that such a translation will someday be made. Does history not teach us that formulas that were once considered opposites have subsequently shown themselves to be mutually translatable? Should we not show patience, that true patience that expresses tolerance?

I call this attitude subtle not, clearly, because I doubt the good intentions of those who have adopted it, and certainly not because I attach only secondary importance to the values of tolerance, patience, and hope—quite the contrary—but because the hermeneutic criterion of translatability inherent in this attitude seems to me insufficient. This criterion basically arises either from a fierce rationalism (every vertical avenue toward truth must have a horizontal correspondence, therefore every intuition must be translatable into another language), or from a rigid absolutism (my version of reality is the ultimate criterion of truth).

In our case, the secularized interpretation of Christ would be acceptable only if it could be translated into traditional formulas, since these are considered normative. Consequently, one wonders if, having a secularized comprehension of Christ, one could still affirm that he has two natures in a single person, two wills, and so on; or if not, would the secular conception of Christ therefore be wrong?

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[53] Cf., for instance, Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*: "The Church . . . through the centuries, with care and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, has established a rule of language and has confirmed it with the authority of Councils. This rule, which more than once has been the password and the banner of the orthodox faith, should be preserved religiously. No one may presume to change it as a matter of convenience or on the pretext of a new knowledge. Accordingly, this rule will never allow that the dogmatic formulas used by the Ecumenical Councils on the subject of the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation are not appropriate to the people of our times, and that others therefore may be hastily substituted for them . . . because these formulas, like others that the Church uses to propose dogmas of the faith, express concepts which are not bound to any form or to any particular phase of human culture, any more than they are bound to one school of theology or another. No, these formulas present that part of reality which inevitable and universal experience permits the human spirit to recognize and manifest with apt and exact terms, taken either from common or from cultured language. For this reason, these formulas are adapted to the people of all times and all places" (translated from *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1965, 758).

In fact, to this day we have still not found a translation to bridge the gap between a traditional orthodox interpretation of Christ and most of the secular interpretations. We are faced with two languages so different that communication by means of translation is impossible to envision.

The general problem is this: In order to arrive at a certain intelligibility, is the translation of one language into another the only possible way, or is there another way left? If language is a closed system of signs, all we can do is hope in the future. But perhaps language is the very expression of the symbolic character of the human being, in which case the communication of symbols, "words of Being," will not be exhausted in the exchange of mere signs.

But we need not continue at these depths in order to pursue our inquiry.

The Way of Complementarity

Unless we hold with the absolutely privileged character of a particular interpretation, the most immediate solution to a conflict of interpretations is to have recourse to an epistemological perspectivism that will lead us to recognize the complementarity of different interpretations: since a single interpretation does not exhaust a fact, it can be approached from several angles.

I have already noted in the course of these colloquia[54] that the spirit of Indic philosophy provides a fairly elaborate case of this complementary perspectivism. I have called it "hermeneutical pluralism" and have sought to delineate a three-part foundation for it: an ever-transcendent fact, an ever-imperfect understanding, and an ever-limited language.

Now, in order to justify complementarity, we must first discover it, that is, we must show how one interpretation complements another. We cannot simply assume that every interpretation is valid, much less complementary. Every interpretation that claims to be true risks being false for that very reason. There must be a place for error, indeed for an interpretation that differs because it is false. Nevertheless, ours is not a problem of error, but of finding room for a plurality of interpretations.

The thesis of complementarity became famous when Niels Bohr introduced it into the domain of nuclear physics by hypothesizing a complementarity between the wave and particle theories of the constitution of matter.[55] Einstein's famous witticism is fitting: "Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I'm for one; Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday for the other." Both theories are convincing, in the sense that they lead to equally credible experimental results, once one or the other is chosen as a point of departure. But this initial choice is free, it is not imposed by the data; we have still not found any convincing reason for preferring one explanation over the other, and physics can conclude nothing, apart from experimental results. If the results support appearances, that is enough. One can, then, have two complementary explanations of the same phenomenon. But things are not so simple in dealing with problems of metaphysics, for then the problem is not just to be consistent with the phenomenon, but to understand it.[56]

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[54] Cf. my contributions to the Colloquia of 1961, 1962, and 1963, which all deal with this topic.

[55] Bohr saw in his hypothesis of complementarity more than the pragmatic solution to this problem, which has vexed scientific minds since Planck and Einstein, and of which W. Heisenberg was aware from the very beginning. Cf. the latter's remarks in his autobiography *Der Teil und das Ganze*.

[56] It is difficult to acknowledge as genuine complementarity that postulated by a particular Vedānta school, which has assumed the role of assigning to every philosophical system its proper coefficient of truth or its place in the whole of human thought. It thus considers these systems complementary according to its own interpretation, which, in point of fact, contradicts the self-understanding of these

There seem to be two conditions necessary to justify the thesis of complementarity. First, the interpretations cannot be directly contradictory. The affirmations that "Jesus is the Son of God" and that "Jesus is not the Son of God"—if the words are used in the same sense both times—cannot both be true in the same context. The second condition is that we have to find the right perspective on a given fact, that is, its relativity, its relation to a particular context. Then only can we find a common context from which we can see the processes of understanding that gave rise to the two interpretations. In other words, we can affirm that two statements are complementary when we have discovered a point of view from which they are complementary—and we have discovered that point of view when we have found its context.

In order to get a clear idea of the context as the concrete horizon that circumscribes a text, rather than as an unquestioned ultimate foundation, we first have to convert it into a text. That is, we have to be able to question and interpret it as we can a text.[57] After all, it is this constant, ever-deepening quest for ultimate ground that characterizes the dynamism of human spirit. The problem is evidently insoluble when it comes to the destiny of the spirit, which explains the *furor philosophicus* and the *odium theologicum*: they have recourse to no higher court of appeal.

In the example we have chosen, we must first show that it is a matter of two idioms that may or may not belong to the same language. Whereas the horizon of intelligibility of the traditional idiom is based on the pairs—God-Man, time-eternity, heaven-earth, body-soul, person-nature, and so on—the horizon of a secular mentality operates rather on a basis of yesterday-today-tomorrow, authentic-inauthentic, operative-inoperative, experiential-mental, functional-essential, dynamic-static, and so on.

So, regarding the first condition of complementarity (noncontradiction), we might discuss whether one or the other of the above sets of ideas contributes to the intelligibility of Jesus, but we cannot arbitrarily declare that an interpretation that works in one of the two idioms necessarily contradicts the other idiom.

Anyway this is the second condition (finding the context of the fact) that is more important here. Can we find the context that would show us a common platform from which the two types of interpretation had their departure?

The question here is how to interpret Christ, that is, how to find an explanation intelligible to me, one that will help me to understand myself in understanding him, one that will situate his role, his nature in relation to my existential situation. Furthermore, this understanding should not be limited to my individual explanation but should embrace what others have thought of Christ: it should take into account the opinions of my predecessors, without necessarily being in the same form as theirs.

In this we see the creative function of hermeneutics. We know that the elaboration of such a context does not happen spontaneously, but neither is it an impossible task. In a word, finding the complementarity of interpretations is another hermeneutic endeavor.

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very systems. In this case, we might speak of a unilateral complementarity: Vedānta understanding all other systems as complements of one another and these systems refusing to recognize such an interpretation. Cf. the well-known distinction between *pāramārthika* or the real—hence true—order and the *vyāvahārika* or the phenomenal—hence illusory—realm.

[57] An example that clarifies this subject of the complementarity of interpretations is Ricoeur's article from the 1962 Colloquium, where he shows how the phenomenology of religion and a psychoanalytical hermeneutic of religion, "deux herméneutiques aussi opposées" [two such opposite types of hermeneutics] as they may be, can nevertheless "montrer leur fonction complémentaires" [show their complementary functions] ("Herméneutique et reflexion," in *Demitizzazione e immagine*, op. cit, 25).

Here also, a diachronic or historical method should be complemented by a synchronic or systematic one. We should be able to present a description of all the existing interpretations, classify them, and try to understand them in their geographical and historical contexts. As far as I know, such an enterprise has not yet been attempted, because, in general, people are more occupied with defending a point of view than with understanding a human situation. It is significant that the "problem of Jesus" has almost always been considered a theological question, or at most a question of apologetics, but very rarely a strictly philosophical problem.

The Way of Equivalence

The two criteria that we have studied so far arise strictly from the realm of hermeneutics: the first holds that there exists a privileged interpretation that renders translation possible; the second holds that there is access to a common context in finding a complementarity among different interpretations. The third approach demands neither that the interpretations be reducible to one another (through translation) nor that they be mutually referable to a more general context (to justify a complementarity). Rather, it suggests that ultimately two interpretations might actually be equivalent.

In our example, there is no question of finding a synonymity between the two conceptions of Christ, but only of their *equi-valence*, that is, that each has equal validity as an expression of a reality transcending both formulations. But how can we recognize this equivalence? By what criterion is it to be disclosed?

An instance from the history of theology may help to elucidate the question before we return to our example. Despite efforts to establish mutual translatability between the theological concept of the Holy Spirit held by the Orthodox Church and that held by the Latin Church, they are reducible neither to one another nor to a common formula.[58] Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father *and* the Son, or from the Father *through* the Son?

The two formulas do not say the same thing: they neither use the same words nor do they even exist in the same universe of discourse (in one, the origin is not the cause; in the other, the activity of the Father through the Son is not the subsumption of the Son in the Father in the "spiration" of the Spirit). Yet they may "say" the same thing, if by "say" we understand a certain intelligent will, a sense of truth—in short, that which both formulas want to say, what they intend, what they "mean."[59]

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[58] Cf. J. Dupuis, "Unity of Faith and Dogmatic Pluralism," in *Clergy Monthly* 38, no. 9 (October 1974): 383–84, together with the contemporary bibliography on the subject.

[59] Cf. the key passages for our exegesis from the text of the Council of Florence in 1439: "Aliquibus quidem ex Patre et Filio, quibusdam vero ex Patre per Filium procedere dicentibus Spiritum sanctum, et ad eandem intelligentiam aspicientibus (εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἐννοιαν ἀποβλεποντων) omnibus sub diversis vocabulis, Greci [Graeci] quidem. . . . Latini vero . . . Et cum ex his omnibus unus et idem eliciatur veritatis sensus (μιὰ καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ τῆς ἀληθειας συναγεται εννοια)" [Some say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, some say from the Father through the Son, and they all *tend to the same understanding* by using different words, namely the Greek Church. . . . while the Latin Church . . . since by all these concepts *one and the same understanding of truth* is drawn]. In its solemn declaration, the Council proclaimed, "quod id, quod sancti Doctores et Patres dicunt, ex Patre per Filium procedere Spiritum sanctum; ad hac intelligentiam tendit (εἰς ταυτην φερει την εννοιαν), ut per hoc significetur Filium quoque esse secundum Grecos quidem causam (αιτιαν), secundum Latinos vero principium (αρχην) subsistentie [subsistentiae] Spiritus sancti, sicut et Patrem" [that, the way of speaking of the holy Doctors and Fathers, i.e., that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, *leads to think* that the Son also is the *cause*, according to the Greek Church, or the *principle*, according to the Latin Church, of the substance of the Holy Spirit, just as the Father is] (*Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, op. cit., 501–3).

We should not oversimplify the question by saying that the word is not the thing, and that intentionality always goes beyond concepts. This being true, however, we should also not forget that the notion one has of a reality, which is crystallized in the word expressing this concept, itself belongs to the reality in question. God, soul, truth, justice, and so on, are not *my* concepts, as if concepts could be my private property: these are some of the words that allude to realities that, however, are not so independent of the concepts that express them that we can consider them entirely outside those concepts. The meaning of the word "justice," for example, does not depend on the whim of the speaker, but it is also not independent of what Men have made of it in order to justify a discourse on something previously unrecognized as "justice." In a word, the expression and the comprehension of a phenomenon are not completely independent of the phenomenon in question, and in turn, the phenomenon is tied to the comprehension one has of it. The foundation and the form, the container and the contents coexist in a sui generis relationship.

But this only complicates the question, since now the "saying" cannot completely break its ties with the thing said, and so our problem remains. How are we to know that the different formulas mean to say the same thing when, in fact, they do not say the same thing? We know, or can figure out, that the two formulations do not contradict each other; we know, or can figure out, furthermore, that the two formulas preserve the divine unity (*tamquam ex principio*[60]), and are consistent with the Trinitarian doctrine common to both churches. But we do not know if the two formulas are equivalents, that is, if they are of equal value in explaining the same problem. It would be too simplistic to say that the secular dissension and the theological discord, mentioned in the same conciliar document, both arose solely from human myopia.[61] The formulas are in fact not reducible one to the other, but neither are they expressly contradictory. Now, whatever is not contradictory may be possible, but everything that is possible is not necessarily real.

We could extend the argument further and say that if one expression describes the mode of the divine breathing of the Holy Spirit, it cannot describe the other concept; that is to say, even if there is no contradiction between the two formulas *in abstracto*, there may be contradiction *in concreto*, since either the *Filioque* is distinctly not the same as "*per Filium*," or the words have no sense at all. *In re*, in reality, the process should follow either one form or the other—or else a third—but it cannot follow two at once. Even if we "explain" them as two hypotheses *quoad nos*, they should justify themselves and prove that they are indeed formulations *cum fundamento in re*. To say that it is merely a matter of human explanations, whereas in reality things are otherwise, is an excellent theological hypothesis, but it leads to no solution of the problem of the validity of divergent explanations. One interpretation may be satisfactory from a certain perspective, and a second may be satisfactory from another. We could eventually find their complementarity, but how could we prove that the two perspectives are equivalent? That would only be turning the whole problem into one of the equivalence of perspectives.

It is not enough to say that some are convinced by one explanation, and others by another, since no point of contact between the two is thus established; nor is there any reason that

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[60] The formula was defined in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyon (the Fourteenth Ecumenical Council). Cf. Denz.-Schön. 850.

[61] "Ecce enim occidentales orientalesque Patres post longissimum dissensionis atque discordiae tempus... Post longam enim laboriosamque indaginem" [Now in fact, after a very long time of disagreement and conflict between western and eastern Fathers... After a long and difficult inquiry] (loc. cit.). Or again, "Magno studio invicem usi sunt... summa cum diligentia et assidua inquisitione discuteretur" [They studied each other's ideas for a long time... to discuss with great care and painstaking research], ibid.

the partisans of one hypothesis should accept the other as if it were equivalent to theirs. Otherwise, any interpretation would be valid as long as someone upheld it.

In any case the separation, the schism, remains.

Thus the affirmation that the two formulas are equivalent does not really work, even if (after recognizing that) they are neither incompatible nor contradictory. Do we need then a third interpretation that would unite the two others? It would only lead to the destruction of the previous interpretations, if the third is to be recognized by the two disputing parties—that is, the true interpretation would no longer be either the first or the second, but the third. If the third interpretation is not acceptable to the other two parties, then we have three interpretations in conflict: the first, the second, and the syncretistic. In fact, history shows examples of mediating solutions that have indeed become new religions, hypotheses, philosophies, theories, and so on.

Must we completely reject the idea of equivalence, or is there still a way to justify it?

Returning to the Trinitarian example, we could say that the equivalence between the two formulas for the procession of the Holy Spirit is not a matter of interpretation but of authority. I prefer to speak of authority here rather than faith, because, though this authority may be accepted as such by virtue of a communion of faith, it is the authority recognized by both parties—and not faith as such—that formulates and establishes equivalence. The two formulations were not considered equivalent until the declarations of the Council of Florence were accepted by both conflicting parties. The interpretation of the Council said only that there was no contradiction between the two formulas, and that they and their respective theologies were not incompatible.[62] But the Council had not given a *new* interpretation of the problem itself.

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Returning now to our principal example, we find ourselves in a situation wherein two interpretations differ radically, leaving no possibility of compromise. They belong to separate, noncommunicating universes of discourse. A declaration of equivalence could only come from an authority recognized by both parties in question: this has become an existential problem, a historical question, a decision that plunges hermeneutics into the very midst of life, of praxis, and even of faith.

Just as a Council recognized by both parties was able to establish the equivalence of *Filioque* and *per Filium*, only a "Council" having authority for people of both the traditional and of the secularized worlds, and hence worthy of their faith, could define an equivalence acceptable to both worlds.

But in order to arrive at that point, a way must first be cleared. In other words, the hermeneutic function does not stop here. It still has to look for an area of mutual comprehension between the two worlds, even if there is no assurance that these efforts will succeed.

The Way of Transcendental Criticism

It is precisely the phenomenon of secularization—an awareness that all reality, even thought itself, is permeated by the temporal factor—that helps us to discover the relativity

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[62] Note that the conciliar text only says that there is no intentional incompatibility: "Graeci . . . non hac mente proferunt ut excludant Filium . . . Latini . . . non se hac mente dicere . . . ut excludant Patrem. . . . Tandem in infrascriptam sanctam et Deo amabilem eodem sensu eademque mente unionem unanimiter concordarunt et consenserunt" [The Greek Church does not use that expression so as to exclude the Son (from emitting the Spirit), nor does the Latin Church say so in order to exclude the Father. . . . Finally, they unanimously agreed and assented to the below-described union, sharing the same feelings and mind; this is a holy union, welcomed by God] (loc. cit.).

(not the relativism) of the truth, and therefore of all interpretation. This relativity touches not only the subjects and objects of knowledge, which are different poles of the Real, but also the time in which the interpretation is realized. The whole hermeneutic process is subject to temporal development, and therefore depends on time as much as any other process. This means that a secular hermeneutic has to take into account not only the evolution of contexts and the changes taking place within the subjects involved in the process of understanding, but also possible variations in comprehension itself in the course of temporal development.

This does not mean that what is true today will be false tomorrow, but it does emphasize the fact that what is true is true because it is true *today*; and that it will be true tomorrow only when "tomorrow" has become an authentic—hence a new—today, and not an idealistic projection of my today.[63]

The true "today" of tomorrow is more than the "today" of today plus twenty-four neutral hours. Or, we might say, these twenty-four hours separating us from the "today" of tomorrow carry not only new events on the accidental crust of a slipping within time, but they contain, ungerminated, an entire life and its spontaneity, scarcely manipulable in the laboratory of today. We may have excellent "observatories" of the future and precise instruments for predicting it, but we still cannot eliminate the element of radical novelty, which is precisely what converts it into the future, and not into a more or less homogeneous or artificial prolongation of the present.

Secularization, we have said, makes us take time seriously. Consequently, the criterion of validity for a secular hermeneutic depends on the temporal moment wherein it is situated. Truth is not decided by a majority vote; that would be a caricature of secularity. Truth is a function of time, not of numbers. Rather, this criterion rests on the ecclesial—or, if you prefer, historical—or simply the human fact that a certain idea or interpretation comes alive and is held to be true on the same evidence that an obsolete conception offered in its own time.[64] There is, then, no absolute criterion, though we could not recognize any criterion superior to that which we utilize in a given moment. We hold a criterion to be valid, but at the same time we are aware of its contingency or fragility, without therefore taking up another in its stead. It is this consciousness of the validity and the relativity of hermeneutics that we have called "transcendental." The commonsense objection that nothing, now, guarantees that tomorrow 2 + 2 will not equal 5, for example, can easily be answered. What secularized awareness says, in fact, is that the guarantee that such a thing will not happen is contained solely in the fact that the people of tomorrow will also see clearly that $2 + 2 = 4$. We have confidence in them. All the same, the problem is not on the level of formal abstraction as such, but on the level of the real in its totality. In fact, it is certain that $2 + 2 = 4$ is true only where the signs have some real signification: "Two books plus two books are four books," but these "books" do not exist. Yes, $2 + 2 = 4$, but the Bible and the Qur'an are not at all equal to the two latest novels by Agatha Christie (though I have nothing against detective stories).

This qualitative way of thinking, after all, is much more rigorous. In fact, the guarantee that $2 + 2 = 4$ does not exist outside of the clarity with which we see that the equation is right. The confidence that tomorrow it will be the same is totally extrinsic to mathematical evidence, and to anthropological first. This belongs to the same category as the confidence that the sun will rise tomorrow—this being in the cosmic and gnoseological

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[63] Gabriel Marcel dealt with these problems in his remarkable study *Esquisse d'une phénoménologie et d'une métaphysique de l'espérance*, in *Homo viator* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 37–86.

[64] Cf. my contribution to the Colloquium organized by E. Castelli, *L'infaillibilité* (Paris: Aubier, 1970), 423–54.

domain.[65] But the desire to fix, once and for all, the laws of thought is like wanting to stop the course of the cosmos or to kill the very life of spirit.

Be that as it may, secular hermeneutics stresses that the temporal moment of interpretation also belongs to interpretation. This means that a secular hermeneutic—which, we repeat, is not necessarily profane—maintains that one cannot claim to give absolute interpretations, that is, interpretations valid for all people at all times. In dialectical terms: no one can give an interpretation that is universally valid, as long as not everyone will rally to that interpretation. One cannot claim to set up a hermeneutic valid for all times, as long as any era has, in one way or another, not accepted this hermeneutic. For the secular mentality, the gratuitous presupposition that human nature or at least human intelligence is immutable does not hold up.

The way of transcendental criticism consists in the effort to find a criterion for interpretation that will take into account not only what lies beyond our consciousness but also what lies on this side.[66] It is a matter of transcendental criticism in the sense that the criterion of interpretation considers not only the subject and object of the interpretation, but also the constant dynamic relation between them: hence the radical relativity of all interpretation, not just because our intelligence is limited or because the object is transcendent (indeed always "beyond"), but because the very act of interpretation embraces both moments in the fundamental unity of the very act of existing.[67] Moreover, so-called transcendental theology claims to say nothing other than this.[68]

To conclude this section, let me say once again: a transcendental hermeneutic is one that questions itself constantly about the facts to be interpreted (which are never considered definite), about the presuppositions of the interpreter (which are never considered fixed), and about the results of the interpretation itself (which are never considered absolutely definitive). The proper character of transcendental hermeneutics is therefore just this self-questioning, as a consequence of self-reflection and not by virtue of an exterior principle. Transcendental *hermeneutics* is aware that it is a hermeneutic activity, and accordingly that it is never absolutely identical to the reality it interprets.[69] This amounts to saying that reality

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[65] It is well known that this automatic "confidence" in the rising of the sun was not always the case: it is not self-evident that the sun must rise, following natural laws. In a good number of religions, there are rites whose function is precisely to contribute toward the rising of the sun. Cf., for example, "But, assuredly, it would not rise, were he not to make that offering (*agnihotra*). That is why he performs that offering" (*SB* II.3.1.5); cf. also the end of the film *Black Orpheus*.

[66] "nicht ein *jenseits* des Bewusstseins, sondern ein *vor* ihm Liegendes" [something lying not *beyond* consciousness, but *before* it], Max Müller gives as one meaning of *transzendental* in his *Herders kleines philosophisches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), *sub hac voce*.

[67] "Ihr Gegenstand ist daher weder das Sein noch das Denken, weder das Subjekt noch das Objekt, sondern die je schon im akthaften Wissen Gegebenen von Bewusstheit und Sein" [The field (of transcendental philosophy) is neither Being nor thought, neither subject nor object, but rather the elements of Consciousness and Being which are already given in knowledge in act] (H. M. Baumgartner, *Sacramentum mundi* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), *s.v.* "Transzendentalphilosophie."

[68] According to Karl Rahner, transcendental theology consists in wondering "ob eine 'transzendentale' Fragestellung der Möglichkeit einer Erkenntnis im Subjekt selbst hinsichtlich eines Gegenstandes der Offenbarung und des Glaubens (des Gegenstandes überhaupt und bestimmter Gegenstände) gestellt werden kann" [if a transcendental question can be raised about the possibility of any knowledge, in the subject himself, about an object of hope and faith—both the object as such and a specific object] (*Sacramentum mundi, sub hac voce*).

[69] Cf. the example of dogmas, which serve as channels whereby the believer reaches the *res significata*. Cf. the Thomist expression: "actus autem credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile, sed ad rem"

itself is never given once and for all. For this reason, a transcendental hermeneutic cannot arise except from a secularized consciousness.

The way of transcendental criticism attempts to establish the coefficient of validity accompanying each interpretation not by virtue of the knowledge of its own presuppositions (which are destroyed as such by being converted into postulations), but by virtue of the conviction that no one can dispense with presuppositions that limit but do not destroy the validity of every interpretation.[70]

Instead of pursuing the study of secular hermeneutics any further here, we will now try to apply the process of transcendental criticism to our example.

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It goes without saying that this is not a matter of defending any secular interpretation of Christ, or of denying the place of error in interpretation. Moreover, secular interpretations of Christ in general have never reached the depth and fullness of the interpretations that are two millennia old. I would like only to abstract certain trends in this matter.

A secular interpretation of Christ stresses his role today, his function in time, and not his immutable essence.

His nature is defined in terms of his historical significance and his contemporary presence, which deal with the ontological consistency of Jesus of Nazareth. His relationship with the Father is not expressed in theistic terms but in a more apophatic fashion, as a certain awareness of his unity with the central mystery of life or existence, or rather, in terms of his unity with suffering and nonliberated humanity.[71]

But we must add immediately that there is no question of simply translating it back into traditional language. The fact that secular interpretation cannot be reduced to ancient categories offers us a new perspective on the meaning of Christ. We must emphasize again that the point of departure for a transcendental critique of the hermeneutic of Christ is not, as in certain traditional hermeneutics, the historical Jesus or the Christ of faith, but the facts of human consciousness—neither presupposing that these are strictly immanent, nor seeking some kind of transcendence. Rather, our point of departure attaches itself directly to the motto we have placed at the beginning of this study: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" That is, what do people—including Peter and the apostles—think? A transcendental critique would analyze this "what men say" as evidence of variation at the different levels of understanding; it would seek to discover links with other universes of discourse and, while

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[the act (of faith) of the believer does not only reach to the verbal expression but to the real thing] (*Sum. theol.* II-II, q. 1, a. 2 ad 2, and *in corp.*).

[70] Cf. the basic text of H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

[71] Cf. the words of Karl Rahner: "Mancher, der die orthodoxen Formeln der Christologie ablehnt (weil er sie falsch versteht), mag existentiell den Glauben an die Menschwerdung des Wortes Gottes dennoch echt und glaubend vollziehen. . . . Mancher begegnet Jesus Christus, der nicht weiß, dass er denjenigen ergreift, in dessen Leben und Tod er hineinstürzt als in sein Geschick. . . . Er sein Menschsein ganz und ohne Vorbehalt annimmt (und es bleibt dunkel, wer es wirklich tut), der hat den Menschensohn angenommen, weil in ihm Gott den Menschen angenommen hat" [Someone who rejects the orthodox formulae of Christology—because he has a wrong understanding of them—would simply like to exhaust faith, existentially, in God's Word becoming Man, although in a pure and faithful attitude. . . . Someone meets Jesus Christ without knowing that, by so doing, he catches the One into whose life and death he is inserted as into his own destiny. . . . So, those who accept their own humanity completely and without reserve are those who—but it is not clear at all *who*, in fact—have welcomed the Son of God because, in Him, God has welcomed Man] (*Sacramentum mundi, s.v.* "Jesus Christus").

showing their relativity, would try to determine their possible validity. It would not choose to ignore obscure points or unsolved problems, nor would it exclude a priori any rough attempt at an answer. Nevertheless, answers would not be limited to a mere exposition of examples. On the contrary, it would seek, insofar as possible, to find a single source while remaining aware of the relativity of every possible response. We will try again to say something more about this source.

Some might say that the above is an ideal far removed from reality. Certainly, but even this awareness of the abyss between the goal and its realization belongs to transcendental criticism.

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We are limited to touching briefly on the question of the pluralism of interpretations and its application to the instance of Christ, but it may be opportune to meditate for a moment on the practical importance of this theoretical question: how to find means of resolving conflicts of interpretations.

All the values of pluralism and tolerance are at stake here. If one system cannot be translated into another; if there is no complementarity to be found and we cannot accept any declaration of equivalence; if we cannot discover any faults in our interpretation, and are thus led to think that others are simply wrong, what can we do?

Unless we find the intrinsic limits to all our interpretations, there is nothing left but to try by all means to "eliminate the Turk,"[72] and so much the worse for the individual if he succumbs in the combat for "truth," "justice," "God," or any other absolute that may be placed on the pedestal of civilization. The arguments of sophists pass unnoticeably into military armament. The history of most cultures and religions are sufficient testimony of this.

Here we touch the limits of interpretation. The situation becomes extraordinarily difficult when, as in the case of Islam, or in the theory of the absolute sovereignty of nations, we have recourse to no higher court of appeal in the event of conflict. Only the absolute victory of one side can resolve the conflict. Likewise in the case of absolute democracy: it recognizes no higher instance, and therefore nothing prevents a sufficiently strong majority from becoming a dictator—democratically. The consequences are so obvious that we need not be more specific.

Of course, the law of the jungle has been toned down by a negative tolerance that agrees to accept the other only because "converting" or "convincing" or forcing him to accept "the truth" would entail even more difficult problems.[73] This ends in a forced tolerance, a de facto but not de jure coexistence. Absolutism of thought can only lead to absolutism of action. The hermeneutics of secularization challenges classical hermeneutics to avoid this trap without falling into the anarchy of agnosticism and relativism—a point we must emphasize further, though admittedly in a seminal fashion.

The Permanence of the Symbol

In glancing over the multiple interpretations of Jesus throughout the ages—always diverse, sometimes contradictory, and frequently incompatible—one question comes to mind: Why the persistent efforts of every age to be connected in some way with him? Or more concretely:

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[72] The expression "eliminate the Turk, but not the Man" appears often in the works of Erasmus. Cf., for instance, *Enchiridion* 8.6, in *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 14 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 358. Erasmus means that we must kill the evil within the Man, but not the Man himself. The image is both piquant and meaningful.

[73] Cf. my essay *Pluralism, Tolerance and Christianity* (now in Volume VI, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*).

How do we explain that there are Marxists who want to be Christians, revolutionaries who call themselves disciples of Christ, humanists who openly confess that they follow Jesus, conservatives who proclaim that they are faithful to him, or liberals, socialists—in a word, orthodox believers as well as heretics of all kinds who make use of Jesus? What do all these widely divergent interpretations have in common? They are neither translatable nor complementary; many of them cannot be called equivalent, and a great number of them have not reached the stage of transcendental self-criticism where they can even pose the problem of pluralism. Obviously, what they have in common is Jesus.

Who is this Jesus who died abandoned, whom almost no one seems willing to reject completely anymore, even those who declare themselves freed from clerical, ecclesiastical, and religious prejudices? "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" Even in his own time, there were many different answers, and since then they have multiplied even more.[74]

How can we explain these attitudes, at once so divergent, contradictory, and multiple? *Who* then is this Jesus, who seems to have defied every hermeneutic? Where does his strength come from? What is his message about? Not God, since there are atheists who claim to follow him; not Christianity, because there are avowed non-Christians among his followers; not law and order, because there are those who fight in his name to destroy these very things; not the primacy of contemplation, since he has become the model for action and involvement; not even peace, because he proclaimed himself "a sign of contradiction,"[75] although what we see today is rather the opposite. Furthermore, though this Jesus is long dead, and the interpretation of him has broken into a thousand pieces, he still stirs up hate and persecution, overt and concealed. We may doubt that he was resurrected on the third day, but we cannot doubt that he is still quite alive in the twentieth century. (And I have not even mentioned the charismatic and Pentecostal movements, the "Jesus people," etc.)

Who is this *real* Jesus? Is he solely the Jesus of history? Or the one who was resurrected on the third day? Or he who remains among us in diverse and unexpected ways? Is he the suffering mass of humanity, as an evangelical exegesis suggests? Is he the Eucharist, or simply the Bread? The Son of Mary, or the Son of God, or the Son of Man?

I could give my opinion, proclaim my belief, but I do not think you are interested in a private opinion or in that of a particular group.[76] We have suffered too many monopolies already to establish yet another. Individual answers are not our concern. I may know what this person or that group thinks of Jesus, but I am also interested in what Man in general, what other people, say of the Son of Man. We are interested in an answer that could embrace all Men of goodwill who recognize Jesus in one way or other, though we may not share their opinions. Is there an answer to such questions?

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[74] What is called the "Christ-consciousness" is regarded as the highest level of realization by several Hindu schools of spirituality. Cf. also C. G. Jung saying, "In the Pauline Christ-symbol the deepest religious experience of the West and East meet." Commentary to the German translation of the *T'ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih* by R. Wilhelm (in English: *The Secret of the Golden Flower* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1935], 133).

[75] In all of his preaching and actions, but this very phrase was uttered as a prophecy—when Jesus was still a baby—by the old Simeon talking to Mary; see Lk 2:34.

[76] "Qui comprend comme vous les dogmes chrétiens? . . . Qu'importerait que vous eussiez seul garde la véritable tradition de Jésus, si ceux qui sent les chrétiens l'avaient oubliée? Que serait une religion mal comprise par tous ses fidèles sauf un?" [Who understands the Christian dogmas like you? . . . What would it matter if you alone had kept the true tradition of Jesus, if those who are Christians had forgotten it? What would a religion be that is misunderstood by all except one?] wrote Jacques Rivière in his second letter to Paul Claudel (March 17, 1907), *Correspondence* (Paris: Plon, 1926), 30.

To venture an individual opinion here would be presumptuous and inappropriate. But could there be a communal response, perhaps, a liturgical *amen*? Can we speak on behalf of those people who have been touched by the Son of Man? Unless this is possible, we cannot even attempt a rough answer.

Now, what is common among all the attitudes mentioned above? Certainly not an idea. No intellectual content has the consensus we seek. Besides, to reduce the different conceptions to a lowest common denominator would give us a lifeless abstraction that nobody would recognize as his own.

What the different interpretations of Jesus have in common is precisely Jesus, as we have said. The interpretations differ, certainly, but they recognize that this Jesus is important, that there is "something" expressed by this word, whether it is called "power," "love," "service," "person," "ideal," "divinity" . . . positive or negative, good or bad, leading to liberation or to slavery. In any case, this Jesus has survived the most diverse interpretations.

Why? we ask ourselves now. Two points become indubitably clear, it seems to me. The first is that this permanence of Jesus is not due to logical coherence or to internal necessity of any sort. No logical reason can answer our question. No dialectic can show us why Jesus survives. The second observation is that his permanence is not, however, due to the organized human will, to a sort of conspiracy, or to any kind of historical imposition. In some centuries, perhaps, one might have believed that the church or some temporal power arranged these things through a kind of clerical strategy, but it is no longer credible today. Things have followed their course without the intervention of logic or the human will. It is the lot of Western history, culture, religion, or whatever you may wish to call it to have lived *through* and *with* this Jesus for almost two thousand years. He has entered into the archetypes and instincts, into the very marrow of this civilization.[77]

We still speak of Jesus, I would suggest, because he is a symbol, perhaps the most powerful symbol in the West. All conceptions of him converge not in their notional contents and not in their axiological evaluations, but in the communal response, the liturgical *amen* that we seek—and this resides in the fact that Jesus is a symbol, and that a symbol is a stronger invariant than an idea and all its interpretations.[78]

I will add immediately that the *symbol* is not a *sign*. A sign belongs to the epistemic order and always signifies something other than itself. A symbol, on the contrary, is the very manifestation of Being, or Being as manifestation. A symbol is symbol only of itself, of that which it symbolizes in the very fact of being symbol. Symbol is simply the symbol of what is "symbolized"; it is neither substitute for something else, nor the thing in itself, but the thing as it appears. That is why a symbol is always a symbol *for someone*. In the moment it ceases to be symbol for a consciousness, it ceases to be symbol. This is also why the symbol cannot be interpreted: it is its own interpretation. The symbol is the proper interpretation of the being of which it is the symbol. If we ask, "With what might we interpret a symbol?," this "what" would then be the true symbol. And that is why the symbol can only belong to the order of the relation between subject and object. It is neither purely objective (it is always symbol *for someone*), nor exclusively subjective (it is always symbol *for something*). Hence, unlike objects of the epistemological order, a symbol can have an indefinite number of interpretations, and these do not need to be compatible.

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[77] Cf. the saying of K. Jaspers, "Wir Abendländer sind alle Christen" [All we Westerners are Christians].

[78] An interesting account of the inspirational force still present in the symbol of Jesus can be drawn from the descriptions of twenty modern novels, plus the bibliographical list, in the original work by Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

My task here is not to deal with the symbol or its relation to myth.[79] It will be enough to apply what I have just said to Jesus.

Most people who pronounce the word "Jesus" would probably agree that it is indeed a symbol. He is symbol of himself, though this symbol reveals itself to us and to others in very different forms. The consistence of a symbol does not "consist" in the "distension" of its meanings. The symbol is polymorphous, and polysemy is connatural to it. The striking thing is not that there are several interpretations of Jesus, but that, in spite of this, he remains a living, and therefore a true, symbol—above or below, as you will, the ideas that Men have had of him.

North America and Soviet Russia[80] are two striking examples of this phenomenon. In the ecclesiastical dispersal of a multiform and even chaotic New World Christianity, Jesus is perhaps the only figure who emerges as a valid symbol for more than 95 percent of the population, including those who do not declare themselves Christians. And, even with the almost total absence of religious education—and the near impossibility of participating in, and above all of knowing the meaning of, Christian worship—Jesus is the supreme symbol of truth and goodness for most of the population of western Russia.[81]

In conclusion, we might state that secularization has actually changed or even destroyed most of the traditional affirmations about Christ, but it has not succeeded in eliminating Jesus. We have changed interpretations, modified the content, transformed the *logos*—but we have saved the container, we have preserved the symbol. Secularization has upset the world and changed hermeneutics, but it still belongs to the same Western Christian myth of which Jesus is the cornerstone, the living symbol.

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[79] I agree that "aus einem entmythologisierten, säkularisierten Bild der Welt ein neuer Mythos" [out of a de-mythologized, secularized worldview, a new myth] can arise, as it is written in J. Feiner and L. Vischer, *Neues Glaubenbuch* (Freiburg: Herder; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1973), 279. The problem is that, for a good number of philosophers and historians of religion, the word "myth" has other connotations. Cf. the entire section "Säkularisierung und Christusbekenntnis," 277–80, which seeks to explore the *Fremdheit* (extraneousness) of traditional formulas for modern Man, and warns us against an *Interpretationschristentum* (interpretative Christendom) that would be completely sterile.

[80] The text dates back to 1975.

[81] By way of an anecdote: it was Christmas, some years ago in an Indian city, a center of Hindū pilgrimage. About a half dozen Hindū friends and three young Russian students—the latter lacking religious education and without much concern about religion—took part in the Christian Christmas liturgy. The Hindūs found the celebration congenial and prayerful; their reactions were positive, but without great enthusiasm. The Russians, however, were upset, deeply moved, and transformed. Christian worship (which two of them were attending for the first time) spoke to them from within; it related to them, awakening hidden and ambivalent depths. *This Jesus* is not just an interesting person, but a real symbol.

7

THE LIE

A Psychoanalytical Experience

Introduction

On a certain level, the subject of the lie seems to be relatively new.[1] Philosophers, for example, avoid it, for reasons I will attempt to explain; moralists, meanwhile, point it out, discuss it at length, tell many lies about the lie and moralize about it (although morals is, in fact, a very important subject). But if we do not first clarify what exactly the lie is, we inevitably fall into the same impasses as the moralists who, after condemning it from a speculative-theoretical point of view, then proceed to tell us that "white lies" are something else altogether and that, for example, a person who is dying cannot be told the truth, that we need to respect certain forms of politeness (which are no more than lies), that gain by underhanded means is not a lie, and all the other well-known examples. Lawyers also speak about the lie, though pragmatically, for the purpose of understanding how to protect themselves from the liar and expose the lie.

These are all important points, but they do not touch the heart of the problem of what the lie is. Psychoanalysts face the lie existentially and once again, thanks to the praxis that has conveyed their contact with a dimension of reality that goes beyond their field.[2] Often, however, there is an unwillingness to look beyond one's own sphere, perhaps in the fear that too deep an investigation might cause it to break up. Who else has talked about the lie? I believe it is very significant that, while psychoanalysts, moralists, and lawyers tackle the problem of the lie, poets, in virtue of the prophetic function of poetry, have approached it from another perspective.

Without dwelling too deeply on this point, I would anyway like to cite three or four passages from a fine essay by Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," in which he says that, in order to save the world, we must rehabilitate the lie by placing it at the center. Quoting a sentence on the front of the Academy, he writes, "Just as those who do not love Plato more than truth cannot pass beyond the threshold of the Academe, so those who do not love Beauty more than truth never know the inmost shrine of Art."[3] And, in defense of

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[1] Today this applies to all philosophy dictionaries. Philosophers write about the truth, for example, but there are few who write thematically about the lie. As an honorable exception, see the articles by G. Bien and R. Denker, *Lüge*, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, vol. 5 (Darmstadt: Basil and Stuttgart, Schwabe, 1980), col. 533–45, which offers us a view of the development of this idea in Western tradition.

[2] Cf. the bibliographic reference in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, vol. 5 (Rome, 1979), under *menzogna*.

[3] Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," in *De Profundis and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 85.

art, "The fact is that we look back on the ages entirely through the medium of art, and art, very fortunately, has never once told us the truth."[4] A little further up we find: "The only form of lying that is absolutely beyond reproach is lying for its own sake, and the highest development of this is, as we have already pointed out, Lying in Art."[5] This text contains, moreover, a passage that is also interesting from a psychoanalytical point of view, in which the keyword is *archetype*:

> Art finds her own perfection within, and not outside of herself. . . . She is a veil rather than a mirror [of Nature]. She has flowers that no forests know of, birds that no woodland possesses. . . . Hers are the "forms more real than living men" and hers the great *archetypes* of which things that have existences are but unfinished copies.[6]

And again,

> That some change will take place before this century has drawn to its close we have no doubt whatsoever. Bored by the tedious and improving conversation of those who have neither the wit to exaggerate nor the genius to romance, tired of the intelligent person whose reminiscences are always based upon memory, whose statements are invariably limited by probability, and who is at any time liable to be corroborated by the merest Philistine who happens to be present, Society sooner or later must return to its leader, the cultured and fascinating liar. Who he was who first, without ever having gone out to the rude chase, told the wandering cavemen at sunset how he had dragged the Megatherium from the purple darkness of its jasper cave or slain the Mammoth in single combat and brought back its gilded tusks, we cannot tell, and not one of our modern anthropologists, for all their much-boasted science, has had the ordinary courage to tell us. Whatever was his name or race, he certainly was the true founder of social intercourse. For the aim of the liar is simply to charm, to delight, to give pleasure. He is the very basis of civilized society.[7]

So the aim of the liar, we are told, is simply to charm, to delight. Poets are prophets.

I would like to continue along this line—not to make poetry, but rather perhaps what we call philosophy, which does not have to be tedious, though, at the same time, we should not be content with pretty words or naïve intuition. I will not, then, speak to you about truth in its ontological, epistemological, and linguistic aspects; neither will I talk about error, which is obviously different from the truth. I will begin straightaway with a few makeshift notes on the lie, since this is our subject.

I would like to deal with three problems. The *first* concerns the question *What is a lie?* In order to answer this, we must adopt an interdisciplinary approach and an interpersonal philosophy. But as this would take a long time and I do not wish to either repeat myself or stray from the specific problem of the lie, I will limit myself to the questions that are most relevant to our seminar. I would like to continue by suggesting a *second* problem: *Why is the lie possible?*, and conclude with a *third* question regarding the *locus*, that is, the proper space of lie.

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[4] Ibid., 83.
[5] Ibid., 85.
[6] Ibid., 73.
[7] Ibid., 71–72.

What Is a Lie?

The importance of this discussion concerns its very approach. Why has lying been studied so little from the point of view of its nature? Once we attempt to answer this question, the reason becomes immediately clear: present-day philosophy is not equipped for dealing with the problem of the lie, which eludes it as it cannot be grasped using normal philosophical tools. The lie, therefore, presents a challenge to the very nature of philosophizing. Let us see why:

a. Because *the lie is not objective*. Error is objective; it can be located and verified. If I say that this pen is an elephant, you can tell me I am wrong—but a lie is not objective, and therefore a science based on the ideal of objectivity cannot deal with the subject of lying. Natural sciences, for example, are unable to locate the lie because it is neither objective nor objectifiable. (Later we will see more clearly how the lie disappears when it is objectified.)

b. Because *the lie is not subjective*. It is neither hallucination nor fantasy. If I truly believe that this pen is an elephant, then I may have myself shut up in a psychiatric clinic and analyzed from all aspects to find out whether or not I am hallucinating. Hallucination is subjective; it is not a lie.

Yet, if the lie is not subjective, then we find ourselves faced with an even greater challenge than the former, because we cannot apply phenomenology (at least not in the terms in which phenomenology has so far been understood; according to classic phenomenology, in fact, there must be a clear and limited state of consciousness—Husserl's *noema*—through which, for example, I may describe what a lie is). But the lie is not subjective; it is part of a particular *relationship*. And here we are faced with a great difficulty, because ever since the West repudiated Heraclitus to follow Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, it has been unable to see that a relationship is more serious and important than its two poles, and that it has in itself a validity that is "independent of" and "superior to" the two pillars on which it rests. For example, let us suppose my two fingers are towers that support this pencil (i.e., relationship): if I open my fingers, the pencil falls and the relationship disappears. The relationship of the lie, however, is sui generis; it does not depend on the pillars that support it. Why? Because the lie is precisely a lack of relationship. It is not a relationship; it is the lack of a relationship that *should* exist, that we expect to exist, that we remember as being. This is the problem.

How can we visualize a lack of relationship? Think about a bridge when it collapses. The lie is the breaking of the relationship, since there is no relationship between the liar and his interlocutor. There is no *believed* relationship; there is another type, which is neither objective nor subjective. If I say, for example, that this pen is a miniature atomic weapon and you believe me, but I am telling you a lie, between *us* there is no relationship, because the relationship is between you and a subject that is not me but that you believe to be me. I, in fact, being aware of my lie, do not identify with my deceiving self. We have, then, two different subjects: that which I know myself to be and that which you believe I am (and that places you in a condition of dependence and fear—you will all be at my disposal and I may do with you as I wish). Here, however, we have the substitution of a relationship (yours with me holding a pen) with another relationship (yours with me holding an atomic weapon), which, however, has not changed in me (I know myself as a man holding a pen, while you believe is a weapon) but only in you. In actual fact, it is a relationship in appearance only, because if you discover my lie or I reveal it to you, this dependence- and fear-based relationship will disappear.

Another example: Let us imagine that a family, made up of father, mother, and son, is suspected of sinister acts. During the investigations they are questioned by a police officer: all three give matching statements in which they claim to know nothing, but, while the father

and mother are innocent and really do know nothing, the son is guilty and therefore knows the truth. All three say the same thing, but the father and mother are not lying, while the son is. At a certain point, the mother, who is more intuitive than the father, discovers the truth, but to defend her son continues to give the same version. The mother, discovering the truth, becomes a liar, because the discovery of the truth makes us liars, accomplices of the lie system. It is the loss of innocence.

(As an aside, I would like to point out how clearly this is illustrated by the tragedy of the intellectuals of our time, who become liars as they discover the truth of a lie system. Our closed socioeconomic-political system—which has developed gradually over time, in fact, and which was applied in good faith up until the first or second industrial revolution—we now discover to be unfair, since we can see, for example, that the so-called third world is suffering the consequences of it. Since it is a closed system, while on one hand things are improving, on the other hand they will inevitably get worse. Once we discover that this is a lie system, in continuing to remain silent despite knowing the truth, we become its accomplices. Perhaps this represents the great challenge of today. In other words, on discovering the institutionalized injustice of our present-day socioeconomic-political system we become accomplices and liars, if we remain silent for the sake of safeguarding our own interests.)

Coming back to our example, we may say that now, while the son and the mother are part of a lie system, the father, though he is saying the same thing, is not part of this system. In the end, however, the father also discovers the truth and declares it, thereby destroying the lie. Once the lie is uncovered it is no longer a lie: a lie that is not believed is not a lie. In other words, a lie that is believed in its veracity of being a lie ceases to be a lie. In telling the truth the liar is revealed, but the lie is destroyed.

How Is the Lie Possible?

To answer this question we must ask ourselves what is the world of the lie, the world in which the lie is possible. A more academic form would be to examine the conditions that make the lie possible.

If I were to analyze the main myths relating to the beginning of almost all civilizations and cultures, I would begin by saying, "In the beginning of our present-day world was the Lie." Almost all the myths I know—Australian, Indic, Jewish, Germanic, and so on—suggest that our world was triggered by a lie: "You will be as Gods. . . . You will attain immortality. . . . You will have the power to conquer heaven." And it was a lie. The world of the lie presupposes an imperfect world and a fall, and perhaps a modern way of taking these myths—that we now laugh at—would be just this: *in the beginning was the lie.* The modern world came about because of a lie; it is a world based on the lie. I would have liked to develop this aspect more fully, but it would appear too theological. The original sin was sparked off by the lie of the serpent. . . .

Anyway, in a perfect world there would be no fear of the transparency of reality.[8] The liar tells the lie because he is afraid of the truth; it is a defense: "You cannot tell the truth to a dying man, to your wife, to your children, your colleague, your customer—because it would be worse. If I tell the truth to a dying man he will suffer, if I tell it to a colleague he may steal

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[8] Cf. the debate between Kant and B. Constant, followed by the more radical position of Fichte. To Kant, the lie harms the liar himself, and therefore, although it is not permissible, it is not considered an absolute; to Fichte, on the other hand, it is. In his view, in fact, it is better that the world perish than a lie be told.

my job, if I tell it to a customer I may lose him; so out of fear I do not tell the truth!" This fear is founded on the structure of the world that is believed to be real. The liar, however, tries to build his own world, in which he can feel safe without hurting anyone. So he constructs a personal world where he is not judged and can be transparent, while if he enters the world we call real, this world judges him; he can be killed, abandoned by his wife, his customer, he can lose his job, and so on.

At the beginning of the lie there is egocentricity: I, the family, the class, the race. Once this "made-to-measure" world has been constructed, it must then be maintained through the lie. The lie of the priests, the aristocrats, the military, the working-classes—they all live in a lie, that is, in a constructed world that makes sense and is real in itself, while outside you know you have to maintain your privileges hand in glove with a socialized lie system; otherwise they will be taken away. This fear, mind you, is well-founded! If you explain everything, in the end someone will drop the atomic bomb.... (Did you know, by the way, that I have the dishonor of belonging to the very university that constructed the first atomic bombs, and where research on atomic weapons is still being carried out? A large part of this research is secret. To keep a secret, nothing is more convenient than a lie. But they want us to believe that the lie is necessary for defending freedom and justice.) I can deceive in order to attack, to defend myself, to live in peace.

In the lie, then, there is another element apart from the mere *voluntas fallendi* (will to deceive) which, ever since Augustine, has been emphasized as the essence of the lie: I build *my* world because I am unable to bear and to face a more powerful world than my own, which would drive me out and crush me. It is not by chance, generally speaking, that those who are forced to tell lies are the weak: children, perhaps women in a society that is still too male-dominated, those who must defend themselves the most. Putting it in Hebrew: to have the truth (*emet*) you must have trust, faith (*emunah*) in this truth, and without *emunah* there cannot be truth because you do not trust in the truth.[9] Truth does not mean discovering reality but trusting in reality, to the extent that there is no need to create another world in order to defend one's personal shortcomings, positions, or privileges. A weak person who has no trust—in the twofold sense of faith and confidence—is much more inclined to lie.

Deceit, therefore, opens us up to a vision of a structure of reality that is neither consistent nor harmonious. On one hand, the reality that the liar believes to be objective; on the other, the world he creates to defend himself, both from a personal, egocentric point of view and from the perspective of class, race, culture, society, civilization. Perhaps the loss of innocence—which is the first stage in every intellectual vocation—induces us to become liars as it obliges us to take part in this battered world, which can never be led back to the heavenly world. The great dogma of the West, in fact, is the Platonic dogma: there is the realm of ideas, of archetypes, and all the rest is imitation. We tell ourselves that in order to think we must have a criterion; we must measure things against the world of ideas to find out whether this is good and this is bad, whether this corresponds to the truth and this to a lie ... because there is a paradigm of ideas. This is all extremely complex and should be made clear, yet as far as I know, no current of thought in the West has had the courage to say that the world of ideas does not exist. This is why, in the West, pluralism can only be justified in pragmatic terms: we must accept pluralism in order to avoid clashes and conflicts. What we do not realize, however, is that the very essence of truth can be pluralistic, because this world of single paradigms might not exist.

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9 Cf. the biblical notion in the article by A. Jepsen in Botterweck-Ringgren, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970–73), col. 313–48.

Perhaps—if we are to tackle more complicated problems—monotheism itself has been the great drift of Western civilization. To add that God is transcendent, and no man has a monopoly over the truth, helps to mitigate the problem, but does not solve it. The fact that the lie is so necessary, so problematic, that on one hand it disgusts us and on the other (as, for example, in Oscar Wilde) makes us smile, should cause us to wonder whether the ultimate structure of reality is what we thought it was. Perhaps it would be better to say that monotheism was not the cause, but the effect. The monotheistic idea, that is, has triumphed in the West because it responded to the deepest desires (or, should I say, to the most powerful archetypes?) of the Abrahamic tradition. On another occasion we should discuss the Trinity with the purpose of redeeming it from monotheistic interpretation, but this would now take us far off the track.

Discussion carries us a long way. I would not have touched on these points if we had not talked about the overall aspect that interests us all, and so from the petty liar we arrive at the idea that the ultimate structure of reality demands a different conception of Being, of the truth and the lie.

Words as the Sphere of the Lie

Let us move on to the third point: the *focus*, the space, the place of the lie. Now, for the sake of clarity, I ought perhaps to add a cultural interlude here, but I am not sure it is really necessary.

The place where the lie resides is the word—the lie is hinged to the word. "Word": for the sake of giving a common nomenclature, I will very briefly outline a schema that will allow us to then make an analysis. When we say "word" we are still so Platonic that we do not hear the "word," but only the *meaning* of the word, what it means to say. We think only of the *noema*, the idea, and we have forgotten that every word is a perfect *quaternitas*. In every word, if we do not make abstractions, there is first of all a *speaker*; without a speaker there is no word. This is so obvious, however, that it is very often forgotten. Second, there is no word without a partner, an *interlocutor*: word is word because of the partner. No one speaks alone—we speak to another, even though this other may, in some cases, be an imaginary other. Every word has an existential intentionality, which is not its meaning but its transcendent referent. Third, there is no word without the voice, matter, something that can be perceived through the senses, a *locution*. The word is not merely a thought, it is not just the speaker or the hearer; it has a substantial character of its own, and this substantial character is material, it is a voice. Fourth, there is, obviously, no such thing as a word without a *sense* (I prefer to use the term "sense" rather than "meaning"). In grammatical terms we could say that there is no such thing as a word without a *quis*, without a *cui*, a *quo*, and a *quem*. When I say "word," therefore, I mean all the above. The *quid* of a word is a *quaternitas*: a *quis* who speaks to a *cui* (the one spoken to) by a *quo* (that which is spoken through) about a *quem* (that which is said). In other words, there is no *quid* without *quis*, *cui*, *quo*, and *quem*. The *quid* is the *quaternitas*.

We discover, then, that all human reality is "word." All reality is manifested in the word and is word. "In the beginning was the Word." And this Word broke up into words that are coextensive with reality. Tell me something that is not a word, or show me something that is outside of the word. We cannot even think about anything that is unrelated to words. Even the unspeakable and the unthinkable depend on words. Only the Unthought, the Unsaid, might be outside of *Logos*, although it is related to it by the fact that we think its possibility, that is, we put its possibility into words.

Regarding the word, moreover, we must make a distinction that is fundamental but often overlooked due to the enormous influence that modern science has on us: the distinction between *words* and *terms*.[10]

Terms are the signs used by science to describe the phenomena it studies. Signs are conventional and empirically verifiable, and tend to be univocal. Modern science uses terms, although very often these terms share the same names as the words—for example, mass, force, speed, light, matter, time, space, and so on. It is obvious, however, that "light" or "time" have a different meaning to science than those intended by humankind, although there is a very important relationship between the two that cannot be completely done away with. In using terms, science can be objective and therefore independent from Man—although today we know (since Heisenberg) that it can be so only up to a certain point: the observer alters the observation. But I would push the issue even farther: the *thinker* modifies the *thought*. This would be my own principle.

Be it as it may, the scientific form is the perfect objectifiable form: the subject S is the predicate P (S is P). Always in the third person: therefore, we must find a predicate P that corresponds to a subject S and that, in one way or another, can be verified. Terms, being empirically verifiable and tending to be univocal, can be translated into any language. They are, in fact, at the base of all science that is founded on nominalism. Terms are signs, conventional labels: switch, sulfurous, acceleration, telephone, electricity, car can be "translated" into all languages without ambivalence.

This is not the case with real words. Real words are not terms. Since they include the above-mentioned *quaternitas*, they are not univocal; they do not and cannot have one sense only. It would be unacceptable for "justice," "love," "democracy," "family," "grace," and so on to have exclusively the sense that I give them. And while we must learn to distinguish that this is a pen, this is an engine, this is a switch, this is entropy, and why entropy takes place (and if we do not know this, we simply must learn it), if we instead speak about "justice," who can say what justice is? Pope Paul VI? Stalin? Plato? My grandfather? Me? And what about love? I cannot presume that to love means only what I believe it means. Unlike terms, real words are polysemous. And the more polysemous they are, the richer, the more alive, and the more real they are; they have many senses, which can even be equivocal.

Sense, moreover, is precisely that which we create in dialogue, so that if someone starts out by maintaining that the only form of democracy is American democracy, he will be told that there is another and yet another type of democracy, and so on. The same applies to the sense given to justice, human rights, and so on.[11] It is in dialogue that we create the context of the sense of words. Apart from our own world there is also the world of the others.

Science submits that S is P. But I am not S, nor P; I am "I." S is P, whereas *I "is" not, but I "am."* In other words, alongside the "is" (S is P), there is also the "am" and the "are," which represent two other forms of reality that are irreducible to the "is." The world of the "I am" and that of the "you are" have been practically demolished by the intellectuals, and the people in general, of the first and second worlds, thus saving only the sphere of the "he/she/it is." It is dreadful how, even on a personal level, everything *is* and *must be*, without realizing that by so doing two other great spheres of reality are lost—if everything remains in the sphere of the "is." To say, "He is my friend, he is my husband, it is my garden," is quite different than saying, "You are my friend, husband, garden. . . ."

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[10] Cf., for this distinction, Section III, chapter 1, "Words and Terms."

[11] Cf., for an example of this multivalence from an intercultural point of view of human rights, my article "La notion de droits de l'homme est-elle un concept occidental?," *Diogène* 120 (1982): 87–115.

The Phenomenology of the Lie: An Impossibility

Let us see now whether in this schema the lie may be more easily pinpointed. The greatest difficulty consists in the fact that we cannot make of it a phenomenology: where, in fact, is the phenomenon "lie"? What appears in the consciousness of the liar is the truth; what appears in the consciousness of the phenomenologist or the partner is also the truth—of the locution. These two truths are not the same, however: the phenomenologist does not see that what the liar says does not correspond to the truth; if he did, the phenomenologist would reveal the liar and the lie would disappear, because as soon as a lie is exposed, it disappears. I cannot reveal the lie: once revealed, it ceases to be such.

The liar, therefore, pursues a twofold truth. In analyzing the liar, we find three types of consciousness: (1) consciousness A—for example, that the object I hold in my hand is a pencil; (2) consciousness B, identified with my locution, "I say that this pencil is a miniature atomic weapon"; and (3) the consciousness that A is not B; I know that the pencil is not a weapon, but I do not disclose the knowledge. If I disclosed the third consciousness by revealing that it is simply a pencil, it would put an end to the deceit or lie. But I cannot disclose it, and so I remain imprisoned in my system—unless I have an accomplice. (The problem of the liar is that, sooner or later, he needs an accomplice, and this is why "lies have short legs"—for the simple reason that accomplices often have "long tongues" and end up revealing the lie!).

The phenomenologist, however, does not see the third consciousness; he cannot see it. If I reveal the lie, it disappears. I cannot, therefore, recognize both the lie and the liar together, unless I become an accomplice, like the mother in my example, and continue to play the liar's game by not revealing that I have discovered the lie. But let us continue with this example. The son learns that his mother has discovered the truth, that is, that he has told a lie, but his mother is keeping quiet and playing along. Now, with reference to his mother, the son is no longer a liar; being part of the lie system as his mother's accomplice, he is justified, he has ceased to be a liar, because he now plays along only because of his mother. The mother, in fact, has compromised her own situation; she has spoken with the police and now, to protect her, the son (being now within the mother's truth) remains within the lie system. So, the problem is far from simple: the son now plays along and does not deceive the mother, while both deceive the father (who claims they both are innocent) and the police.

The condition for the lie to be possible is that it is likely or *verisimilar* (truthlike). There is, however, a certain shade of meaning that this word does not express: the lie must be verisimilar *without* appearing so. It must appear as a *veri-loquium* and not merely verisimilitude. The lie is not, simply, the appearance of truth. If I say that this ashtray is made of silver, while knowing that it is only stainless steel, I may say so because it has the appearance of silver: it is "veri-similar" to silver. This appearance of truth allows me to use the lie, but it is not yet a lie. If I claim the same ashtray to be an elephant, you would lock me up in a mental asylum. But if I say that it is silver, you believe me because it looks like silver. False silver is such because it looks like silver but is not. Yet if I also believe that the ashtray is silver, then I am in error. The lie, therefore, is neither truth nor error nor the appearance of truth.

And here is the difficulty: the essence of the lie is found where likeness (in our example, that of steel to silver) is hidden. It is verisimilitude that makes it possible for me to tell this lie. The essence of the lie, therefore, consists in being hidden on one hand and known on the other. So when I discover it, it ceases to exist; and if I discover it and keep it hidden, then I become a liar. The essence of lie is anti-revelation. The lie is complicity in the error, without falling into it. The liar always has an accomplice. He is never alone, even if it means splitting himself in two parts. This is why we say that lies have short legs, or that the devil makes the pots but not the lids.

Who conceals—devils aside? It is the word, the locution, that allows us to reveal and conceal at the same time. I said earlier that the liar creates a world that tries to be basically intelligible; otherwise it would not be verisimilar, and would not be believable.

Taking the *vedānta* philosophy to the extreme, I would say that the world is the lie of the Demiurge, therefore a perfect one: God being the author of this cosmic lie of creating the world as something that looks real. Those who know have discovered that it is a lie (the world is not as real as it seems), those who do not know remain within the lie system of this world, that is, within the illusion that they imagine to be reality. I said earlier that in the beginning was the lie. From this point of view, God is the great liar (*māyā*, illusion itself, is the creation of *Brahman*). He knows that the world is not real, while Men believe it to be real, and they remain within the lie. Realization (*vedānta*) is the discovery of the lie, the knowledge that this world is a lie, that it *is* not what it appears to be. Realization is the discovery of the real and, therefore, of the lie that covered up the real. Yet the question is even more subtle, because Iśvara the creator does not explicitly tell us the lie, "This world is real." What makes us believe so is verisimilitude, so that we fall into error. In order to reawaken us, Indra tells us lies, and in seeing the world as a lie we move on from error to truth. In the West we lack a theology of Indra—now, however, we must leave India aside.

The lie can only be verified by breaking out of the lie system, because the lie is such to the liar alone and no one else. The fact that it is not a lie to anyone else is part of the very essence of the lie: to the other, it is the truth. This appearance, or fallacy, of truth is what makes it a lie. The lie, that is, is not a lie to those who are within it. It is verisimilitude itself, therefore, that makes it a lie. *The truth is like reality*: it manifests itself when one knows that it appears exactly in the shape of that appearance. This is steel, and I know that it looks like silver. *The error is the appearance of reality* when we do not know it is appearance—we believe it to be silver, if we do not know that it is steel, which does look like silver. *The lie is concealing the reality of its appearance.* This is why the lie requires a third relationship—a victim. Someone has to believe it. Without anyone to believe it, the lie cannot exist. The desperation of the liar is that, if no one believes him, he will not be able to create this system that he thinks will save him; he needs someone to believe him. (And you also, I imagine, to save your patient from this desperation, sometimes pretend to believe every lie he tells you.)
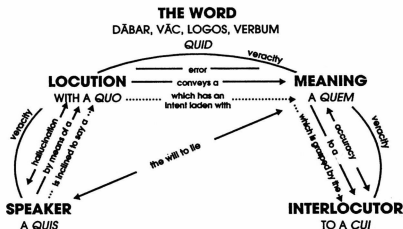
The lie, then, needs a third relationship: a partner who believes in the distortion of reality created by the liar. Therefore, in the lie there is a different intention than the intentionality of appearance: it breaks the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. To you (interlocutors) the ashtray is silver; to me (liar) it is steel. This latter fact is unknown to the partner; he hears only my locution and believes it on the basis of its verisimilitude to what he sees (it looks, in fact, like silver) and the authority of my testimony (I seem, in fact, like a normal and believable man). So, the locution establishes a relationship with the partner, but not with me. I say silver and think steel; the other person hears silver, perceives silver, and believes it to be silver. The relationship, therefore, is in the locution; the lie is in the lack of relationship with me, the speaker.

This may be expressed more clearly with another example. Let us consider that I, believing the ashtray to be steel (while in actual fact it is silver) tell you it is silver, and that you believe my lie (which, however, expresses a truth). Are you part of the lie system? Certainly not in your relationship with the ashtray, but certainly with me. In selling you the ashtray as silver for fifty pounds, I think I have made a great profit and I feel guilty toward you, although you have paid me a "fair" price. In the first example, therefore, I say silver and you buy steel; in the second example I say silver and you buy silver. In the first case, you are in error; in the

second, you are not. In both cases I have lied. How might we analyze this *animus fallendi*? Imagine that later I, the liar, discover that the ashtray was silver. If I do not give myself away, this lie will never be found out.

This example seems to me to illustrate clearly that no phenomenology of the lie can be possible because, I repeat, the lie consists only in the *privatio*, the absence, of a relationship that was believed to exist. There may be the *noema* of the lying consciousness, which is necessary to phenomenology. Only within a solipsistic consciousness that, therefore, has severed all relationships (though, at the same time, the lie is always relationship) may I have the intention to lie, that is, to deceive, but if I do not deceive there is no lie. The lie is the deception pulled off, the hidden success. The lie is a lie when we do not know it as such.

Here we see the fallacy of the famous sophism about the liar: if I say I am lying, I tell a lie (I lie) and a truth (I say that I lie) at the same time.[12] Yet this is not existentially possible—just as I cannot say, "I die," but only, "I am dying" or "I will die." Others may exclaim, "He is dead," but I cannot say so at that very time. Likewise, I can confess, "I lied," and also, "I will lie," but not "I lie." Only the past or future tenses allow us to do away with a relationship of this kind. I may be aware that I am lying, but I cannot declare it without eliminating the lie. There is no such thing as the *noema* of a lie. Others may conclude from my behavior that I am lying, but this does not belong to their own consciousness; there is no possible phenomenology.

THE WORD
DĀBAR, VĀC, LOGOS, VERBUM

S = Speaker, L = Locution, M = Meaning, I = Interlocutor, partner

12 From Eubulides of Miletus (according to Diogenes Laertius, II.108), through Aristotle (*Soph.* 25.180) to the modern philosophers (cf. Francesca Rivetti Barbò, *L'antinomia del mentitore nel pensiero contemporaneo da Peirce a Tarski. Studi. Testi. Bibliografia*, 2nd ed. (Milan, 1964), the bibliography is immense. Cf. also A. Koyre, "The Liar," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 6 (1946): 344–62, and, from a theological viewpoint, S. Breton, "Le paradoxe du menteur et le problème de l'indicible dans les enoncés de foi," in *Mythe et Foi*, ed. E. Castelli (Rome: Archivio di Filosofia, 1966), 517–46.

Veracity is the relationship S → I, in which the Speaker intends to say M to I through L. The opposite would be nonveracity.

Accuracy is the relationship M → I, in which the Interlocutor grasps the meaning of M; he has understood it. The opposite would be inaccuracy.

Hallucination is the inadequacy S ≠ L.

Error is the inadequacy L ≠ M. For instance, I say L1 [elephant] when I should say L [pencil]; or I say silver when it is steel. I say, sincerely, that "euthanasia is morally acceptable," and the sense grasped by the Interlocutor is the opposite. So the partner will say that S is in error, even though S thinks he is in truth because to him L ≈ M.

Lie is the inadequacy S ≠ M, when the speaker gives meaning M to something that to him is M1 and, therefore, is not grasped by the interlocutor.

The lie destroys the word because the meaning M that I grasp through locution L is accurate (true) but the Speaker is thinking of something else, that remains hidden in the Locution.

Again: *in truth the sense of the speaker coincides with the sense of the interlocutor*; truth, therefore, is always personal. I have grasped what you mean by, "I love you, next week I am going to China, euthanasia is a form of moral compassion, the cow is over there in the meadow. . . ." There is a certain harmony between the locution that unveils a sense and what the speaker means: this is truth.

Error is the inadequacy between the interlocutor and the sense, and it is left to us to judge whether "You do not love me, it is not true that the cow is over there in the meadow, euthanasia is morally acceptable. . . ." The error may clearly consist in misinterpreting the locution: he or she does not "love" me, because to me "love" is no more than fondness; Charles is not there, because his real name is Peter. Or it may be a misinterpretation about S: in my opinion, euthanasia is not a moral act, because we do not agree on the sense of "morality."

On the other hand, *the lie would be the immediate inadequacy between the speaker and the sense* through the possibility that the locution conceals my lying intention, and what makes it possible is verisimilitude. In a certain way, therefore, the liar must be much more veracious than "normal" people. The liar must cultivate his prestige, his reputation as an honest man, if he is to cultivate the lie. Paradoxically enough, the lie makes us moral. In order to be a liar, in fact, you must have the prestige, the reputation, and the appearance of an honest person; you cannot afford to make mistakes because, if you do, they will say, "He was trying to deceive us!" The lie, therefore, maintains a certain morality: hypocritical, but "real." All hypocrisy is moral hypocrisy, based on the assumption that we lie in order to defend ourselves—such as, for example, when in the West it was said that the arms race was needed to defend ourselves against the Soviet menace.

Speaking about the lie brings us to reconsider the fundamental terms on which Western civilization is based: the world, the reality of the world, necessity, transience, and so on. A reflection about the lie opens the way to this whole issue which, as I said at the beginning, seems to me to be fairly new. But perhaps we are still novices and are just beginning to discover the possibilities of investigation on the subject. I believe, however, that a psychoanalytical approach, not only to the pathological but also to the everyday lie, might shed light on our research.

SECTION III

THE WORD

1

The Spirit of the Word

The Power of the Word

Jesus, says Luke the Evangelist, was a prophet powerful in his words and in his deeds. One area in which the power of words emerges particularly strongly is that of the encounter between different religious experiences. To give an example that I feel is especially fitting, an intense and religious relationship with the Christian Scriptures on the part of a person immersed in the Hindū religious tradition implies almost necessarily the use of powerful Indic words in the reading of these same Christian Scriptures. This is more than just exegesis, it is a revolutionary act, as long as one is able to go beyond the philosophical sphere and penetrate the very heart of Christian self-understanding by reading within the Gospels a powerful and meaningful message that comes from outside the crumbling walls of Christianity. Those who study the Christian Scriptures are not scholars of the New Testament.

There is no such thing as a New Testament in the words of Jesus; the Sermon on the Mount, as the Christian *svadharma*, is not Law but Love and gospel. He himself reminded us that the ancient Torah was enough. The mentality of a Christian New Testament must be overcome: one Testament suffices. Judaism is right. Or, as I have said often, baptism is not the substitute for circumcision....

I shall try to spell out my thoughts (1) in a general philosophical way, (2) with reference to a particular case, and (3) regarding the future.

General Reflections

There is a subtle link between understanding and interpretation. One thing is clear: all understanding, except that coming from an immediate intuition (i.e., intellectual experience), is the fruit of a more or less elaborate interpretation. The purpose of interpretation is precisely understanding. This amounts to saying that every successful interpretation leads to a new understanding. But any new understanding is like a Trojan Horse within the total self-understanding. New elements coming from the outside are incorporated and they change the very image that a tradition has of itself. It may even bring about a more or less radical mutation.

It all begins with the respectful and proper use of words. Human speech is one of the most momentous activities. When we really speak, we not only exert our humanness, we transform it. "*Homo loquens*" does not mean merely that we are speaking animals, but that we are human by the very fact of speaking. I am referring to real human words, of course, and not mere terms, which are only labels for empirically verifiable things—as I have tried to explain elsewhere. The word is a symbol, the term is a sign. I am referring to human speech (which is always dialogue) and not to the mere passing on of information, which other animals also have. To have severed "righteousness" from "justice," for instance, in translating Christian

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dikaiosynē represented a major revolution in the self-understanding of Christianity: you could be justified (be saved because righteous) while neglecting justice (concerning human issues). For centuries Christendom did not condemn slavery, and even today Christianity is discreetly silent regarding "big business" and the new military power of modern weaponry.

The victory of one word over another is no less important than a political victory. The life of words is still powerful today, in spite of the nominalist wave that has swept the West for centuries and is carried all over the world like an insidious epidemic, by the improperly called "neutral" and "universal" modern technology. When people come together to study the meaning of a word from a cross-cultural viewpoint they are likely to assist in the transformation of the meaning of the word and, with it, of the reality of which the word is a symbol.

An exegete (*exégētēs*) is simply a guide in the jungle of meaning. A *hermeneutics* is allied to Hermes, the messenger god, who introduces new meanings. Hermes, like Indra, is great in cunning and irony. "Our God is a consuming fire," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, quoting the Hebrew Bible.

The internal revolution to which I am alluding is twofold. It touches both traditions, the one that is studied and that of the student, the guest and the host. I shall limit myself here to the latter because for the former we still need much more of a two-way communication. If we study—in the profound and classical sense of the word *studium* (to strive with one's whole being after truth)—a tradition different from our own, this very study leads eventually to an understanding of many of the insights of that tradition. But this produces also a change in us. We begin to be "converted" to the view of that other tradition. But there is still more. The understanding of our own tradition also changes: We are slowly being "perverted." A new interpretation of our own religiousness emerges. When this fact acquires sociological dimensions the self-understanding of a religious tradition often undergoes a mutation. This is the internal revolution I spoke of at the beginning.

Coexistence and dialogue between Christians and Marxists has led to a mutual influence that changes both Christianity and Marxism. The relation between Hinduism and Christianity is changing now from one of domination, and often more or less confessed scorn, to an attitude of sincere respect and often admiration. This is the result of the dialogical dialogue that leads to a mutual fecundation. We are only at the beginning of such a momentous incoming mutation.

A Particular Case

I come now to my second reflection. It concerns a concrete example. We begin by calling "grace" *something* that in other traditions has different names. When we thus translate we assume that we can pinpoint this *something*, which does not need to be a "thing" but may be—a cluster of meanings expressed in a word. How do we justify our translation? Is there a single referent for the translated word?

At any rate, we begin by taking the name metaphorically, namely, by translating. Metaphor literally means translation, or as Aristotle puts it, "the translation of a foreign name." But once a name ("grace" in this case) has been entrusted with the burden of expressing also the meaning of a foreign word, once we are aware that a word has also the meaning of a translated name, we can with difficulty, and generally only with artifice, force it to retain its purely old meaning. We can hardly prevent, in the long run, the opening of a Pandora's box that lets loose all the concomitant meanings that the foreign word invisibly brings with it. These concomitants need not be merely shades of meaning; often they are substantial

neighboring relations that foster and sustain the word in question, making it independently meaningful. Each word, in point of fact, is a microcosm; it carries with it an entire universe and when in freedom (when it *is* free) it reveals a whole world contained implicitly in the particular word. Words do not live in isolation; they are nurtured in a much larger universe of discourse. It is this universe of discourse that is hidden in the Trojan horse of the authentic study of an alien culture. Let us render *Śakti* by grace, for instance, and see what happens. All the *dhvanis* are set free!

Once we translate, say *kṛpā*, *Śakti prasāda*, *anugraha*, *aruɔ*, and so on as "grace" the very concept of grace will change. It is a "kulturpolitische" decision. Culture politics becomes unavoidable. How much meaning can a word carry? The example of the word "God" is typical. Western languages have too quickly rendered as "God" words that had other connotative "referents," and now one wonders what this word means at all. In our case, we have the following alternative: either "grace" means what it means to Christians (and they may agree on a minimal definition) or it loses that precise meaning and becomes a valid name for other traditions as well. For reasons of simplification I skip the many connotations of the English word "grace": gratitude, gracious, grateful, gratuitous, disgrace, congratulation, ingrate, agreeable, agreement, and so on. I shall limit what follows to the Christian theological concept, although it is not free of all the concomitants, Hebrew and Greek not excluded.

We made reference to the political dimension of this problem. In fact, the public arena and the power factor are clearly visible. Very much depends on whose side is the power, and which language, culture, or religion predominates. We can obliterate the original meaning of the translated word by co-opting it into the system of thought of the host language. This is what has often happened in the encounter of religions when the relation is only that of one-way traffic. Either *aruɔ* does not mean "real" grace, because grace is the supernatural and historical saving gift of the Christian God anugraha, or if *aruɔ* means "grace" and grace means what "it has always meant," the original word is captive in a foreign system and only with great difficulty will it break the walls of the host language. The transformation of meaning may nevertheless take place, but very slowly. It will be effected by the use of the word ("grace") more or less explicitly encompassing the meaning of the translated word (*aruɔ*)—in books, conversations, education, mass-media, and so on. The rules of the encounter should not be set by one side alone. This is what happens when philosophy or theology is done in one language alone (only). As long as Christian theology in India is done in English the captivity of Babylon (Babylonian captivity) will continue. This is not yet real dialogical dialogue.

The situation changes when we go also the other way, that is, when we have to translate "grace" by *aruɔ* and explain the meaning of the foreign word (grace) within the world of *Śaivasiddhānta*. The transformation proceeds then at a higher pace and both ways. The interaction is mutual. Both "grace" and *aruɔ* have to adapt themselves to the new milieu. The mutual fecundation may start and with it also the sorting out of meanings, old and new. And certainly it is not a question of superficial reconciliations or closed exclusivisms. The dialogical dialogue opens up an exhilarating experience of the independent power of truth guiding the clarification of the issues.

Yet I have limited myself to stress only one aspect of this complex process. What goes on here is of paramount importance: the *passage from concept to symbol. A concept* is per se valid and meaningful primarily where it was *conceived*. Its ideal is to be univocal. This is why all conceptual systems proceed and progress by way of introducing more and more distinctions. Symbols, on the other hand, are polysemic and polyvalent. This is why world-visions proceed and progress by way of letting symbols emerge. I would like to clarify that

a world-vision (*Weltanschauung* in the sense of Guardini) is not an image of the world (*Weltbild*). The former is a holistic intuition in which the subject is also included. The latter is an objective picture of the world of a particular subject. The English word *worldview* can mean both world-vision and world-picture. In our case the concept "grace" strives toward a univocal meaning, whereas the symbol "grace" can then mean different things to different people and yet within a symbolic unity.

We have already mentioned the alternative: either the translated word is made captive of the language into which it is translated, or it is set free, or at least on parole, in the host language.

Each culture or religion begins with the acceptance of the first part of the alternative. Each word has a particular meaning or cluster of meanings within the limits set by that culture or religion. The second part of the alternative appears, first plausible and then imperative, when one party becomes aware of the importance of the insights of the other party. It all begins with proper translations. It marks the beginning of the decline of imperialisms and colonialisms of all sorts: cultural, religious, linguistic. Words cease to be the monopoly or under the power of a particular group.

Now, the very fact of setting oneself to understand the vision of reality of another religious tradition almost automatically opens up the plausibility of the second alternative. In fact, to study another religion—I repeat, for the sake of studying it, and not of "conversion," domination, refutation, and the like—brings understanding of what other people say and believe. This demands that we share in the other's self-understanding: for the religious phenomenon is not just a set of doctrines floating in the air, but a series of beliefs that have meaning only as somebody's belief. In other words, the student of another religion is directed to look for the *pisteuma* (that which is believed—by the believer) and cannot be satisfied with the *noema* (that which is understood—by the phenomenologist, the analyzer) of the "objective" fact. The *pisteuma* is the intelligible aspect (the idea, if we prefer) of the actual belief of the believer. The *noema* is the intelligible aspect (the idea) of the translation of the other's belief into one's own unmodified field of intelligibility, that is, into the world of ideas and set of references of the person trying to understand the other. The *noema* is my translation. The *pisteuma* is the original. Religious phenomenology, like all true phenomenology, demands immediacy. It cannot be done by proxy. We have to have access to the original, to the *pisteuma*.

In other words, as I have been saying and applying [doing] in my own studies, the belief of the believer is the proper object of religious phenomenology and not the objectified propositional statements. (The belief of the believer and not the objectified propositional statement is the proper object of religious phenomenology.) This amounts to saying that a valid religious phenomenology, or more simply, a proper religious study, takes place when *noema* and *pisteuma* coalesce (in my consciousness, obviously), that is, when our *noema* is the *pisteuma*: when we have really understood what the other believes. The religious *noema* should, in fact, be called *pisteuma*. We must somewhat also believe what the other believes if we have to reach the *pisteuma*.

I have said "coalesce," and not total identification. (I have spoken of coalescence and not of total identification.) It may well be that some aspects of the other's belief are not covered by my understanding, or that my idea of the same problem is larger than the area of understanding—and ultimately of agreement. It could also happen that we cannot really understand what the other believes, that we do not reach the *pisteuma* (and remain with our *noema*). Even then, in this case we are closer to our partner, by not understanding, than by alleging we have understood by reducing the other's *pisteuma* to our *noema*. The caricatures

of the other's beliefs fill not only the pages of the history of religions but also the same religious history of humanity. How many religious wars could have been avoided if men had not fallen into reducing the *pisteuma* of others to their own *noema*. It is one of the most deleterious [of] reductionisms.

The problem looms large and somewhat threatens classical phenomenology, which was not elaborated having in view the problems raised by diatopical hermeneutics, that is, by cross-cultural interpretations. Actually we need sympathy, and eventually love is required, in order to reach the *pisteuma*, which undistortedly reflects the belief of the other. That without love we cannot understand is an old medieval conviction, but it was blurred by the same Scholastic disputes, and is now in urgent need of a new philosophical reflection. After all, philosophy is as much the wisdom of love as the love of wisdom. Perhaps it is the "space" where the two coalesce.

Future Developments

If these considerations are not altogether wrong, the consequences for the future are paramount. Such an approach represents for the West the renunciation of theological and religious colonialism. It means a new era of religious understanding. It will amount in both cases to making an end to fixed religious compartmentalizations and to liberating the religious dimension of the person from dogmatically imposed, sociological straitjackets. It lies on the line of a healthy pluralism. We may establish the meaning of words in the dialogue itself and not be caught in inflexible meanings set once and for all. The point of reference for the meaning of a word does not lie exclusively in our own tradition, but is brought forth in the dialogical encounter itself.

But this is revolutionary indeed. It may mean that religious loyalties are of an altogether different order than group-feelings of any other sort. It conveys the hope that religion belongs to the person (not the mere individual) rather than to a clan, because it is "not born of any human stock, or by fleshly desire" (to quote Christian Scripture), but of that very "grace." Religions are certainly historical realities and organized institutions, but this is only one of their aspects. Human fellowship in its quest for liberation, fullness, or whatever name we may like to use, transcends geographical, historical, and also traditional boundaries. This does not mean at all that institutional and doctrinal loyalties are obsolete. It suggests that they are not the only ones, and not absolute. It is still a long way to that religious peace and understanding that so many sages from East and West have dreamed and written about. But we are closer to that goal because we are more uncomfortable in our own divisions. I see also here a matter of grace.

The Word, Creator of Reality

Pantà di' aútou egéneto.
Through him all things were made
[the *logos*, the word]
Jn 1:3[1]

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[1] "Everything came into being through the Word."

In keeping with a long tradition, I will summarize what I wish to say in verse:

> The word is not word,
> without someone to pronounce it;
> the parable is word,
> only when someone listens to it.
> The word is only word
> when it breaks cosmic silence
> and scatters in reverberating sound.
> When someone says something
> that is embodied in music.
> This something is the cry
> of the actual Being, which is speech.

I repeat myself in prose:

The relationship between Being and Word is constituent. Being and Word are not two; they cannot be divided. Neither are they one; they cannot be confused. Their relationship is *advaita* (a-duality); it is Trinitarian. Being speaks, and the Word is not inferior.

This relationship is mirrored in things. Everything has its own word, and every word expresses one thing. The word *is not* the thing, rather it *expresses* it. The thing *is not* the word, but it is that which makes it happen.

Man is a speaking being, and he speaks because he thinks; but he also thinks because he speaks. If we thought identically, we would speak identically, and vice versa. When a people have nothing of their own to say, they do not need their own language. And they will have nothing to say if they do not think for themselves, if their way of life imitates another's. This is our problem.

The Catalan language is, to say the least, in fermentation. "What is the specific nature of Catalan?" we asked ourselves in the introductory letter to this symposium, and we added that this question "demands a fundamental reflection upon the actual nature of language." Awareness of the ambiguous relationship between the word and the thing is possibly the oldest of human reflections. I would even add that man discovered himself as man when he realized he spoke.[2] This may have led a majority of traditions to elevate the Word to the maximum level of Being: Divinity.

What I understand as word is not merely a sign, but rather the complete symbol; that is, the perfect quadridity of a *speaker* who addresses *someone*, emitting a series of *sounds* charged with *meaning*. Every word (*paraula*), as its etymology indicates, is the *parable* of a speaker who *throws* or *casts* (*ballein*) a series of sounds that carry meaning beside (*para*) a listener who receives them, and then compares them (*parabollein*) with his personal experience in such a way as to understand them.[3] Every word is simultaneously material and intellectual, objective and subjective, personal and transpersonal, human and transhuman.[4]

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[2] "Human beings are their words." This is how Miquel Parets Serra summarizes Burundi anthropology. He explains the eight functions of the word in great detail. It is what begets us, what makes us be, what is always needed, what can do anything, what is shared, what is not swallowed, what is sealed in death, and what is given in inheritance (*Els pobres i la Trinitat* [Montserrat: Abadia, 1991], 17ff.

[3] Cf. R. Panikkar, "Words and Terms," in *Esistenza, Mito, Ermeneutica*, ed. M. M. Olivetti, Archivo di Filosofia (Padova: CEDAM, 1980), 117–33.

[4] Cf. Dante, always surprising: "Trasumanar significar per verba / non si poria; però l'esempio basti / a cui esperienza grazia serba" [To pass beyond the human state is not to be described in words;

We will attempt to summarize this long and complex human experience in three chapters: theogonic, cosmic, and anthropological.

The moment we find ourselves in is critical enough—in terms of humanity, the Earth, and history—so as to merit our apologizing for undertaking such a metaphysical approach and reverting to humanity's first experiences. On the other hand, the guiding thread of our symposium will force us to take certain shortcuts, making us avoid entire areas of the philosophy of language, in order to reach the specific domains of Catalan.

The Transcendent Word: Speaking and Being

Atha śabde bruvati
katham mithyā iti?
Śābarācārya[5]

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." If we read *memra*, we have an Aramaic text from a Mandaic hymn; if we read *vāk*, a Sanskrit text from the *Vedas*; if we read *logos*, a Greek text from the Gospels.

Three-quarters of the Word stayed in Heaven. The remaining quarter of the Word made all things. This fraction "produced" time, space, and everything that moves and inhabits it. When it reached the plenitude of time, the Word became incarnate in order to collect all the fragments of the word scattered across the universe. Some referred to it as *brahman-sarīra*, others as *mysṭérion kosmikon tḗs ekklēsías*, and each tradition gave it different names.

The Word is found on the level of that which many have called Being. But the Word, producer of all things, is in itself fruit of the Sacrifice of Silence from which it emerged. Analogously, Being is, It is Being because it emerged from Non-Being, from Emptiness, if we equate Being to Fullness; from No-thing, if we discover the etymology of *thing* (*res*). No-Word, No-thing, that is Silence.[6]

Countless historical-religious testimonies speak to us of the primal sound, *śabda-brahman* (for example), identified with Being. Our sole commentary on this primary intuition (when the Greeks took the step from mythology to "theology" or "philosophy") will be Hellenic because it is this tradition that has nourished Catalan consciousness, as it relates to European culture.[7]

We are obviously referring to Parmenides's paradigm, which has been the fundamental model for the Western world for the past twenty-five centuries. Parmenides wants to create philosophy, not mythology, and is thus eager to "demystify" the word and replace it with that which he believes is previous and more profound, that which makes it possible: thinking.

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wherefore let the example satisfy him for whom grace has reserved the experience] (*Divina Commedia*, Paradiso 1.70–72).

[5] "If the Word speaks, / how could it be false?"Śābara *Bhāṣya* I.1.5.

[6] Cf. L. Cencillo, *Mito* (Madrid: BAC, 1970), 87; R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); *La naissance du monde*, Sources Orientales, vol. 1 (various authors) (Paris: Seuil, 1959); etc., for the pertinent texts.

[7] Cf. Schelling's acute observation: "Beinahe ist man versucht zu sagen: die Sprache selbst sey nur die verblichene Mythologie, in ihr sey nur in abstracten und formellen Unterschieden bewahrt, was die Mythologie noch in lebendigen und concreten bewahre" [One is almost tempted to say that language itself is a mythology deprived of its vitality, a bloodless mythology, so to speak, which has only preserved in a formal and abstract form what mythology contains in living and concrete form] (F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986], 1:52).

Parmenides wants to free us from mythology by means of ontology. Being and Word are not the ultimate representation of reality, but rather Being and Thinking. The latter reveals to us what things are and what Being is. This paradigm, which either identifies Being and Thinking or makes the pertinent distinctions, practically dominates the entirety of Western reflection, which appears to have accepted the method proposed by the brilliant Eleatic philosopher.[8] Western man wants to discard the mythical *logos* and substitute it for the rational *logos*: the *verbum entis* for the *verbum mentis*, and in more modern terms, the latter for *verbum computans*.[9] Modern science is the most patent proof: scientific thought calculates how things behave: this type of "thinking" has dominated Being, and beings appear to obey the laws of this "thinking."

Ten years before the death of Parmenides of Elea, in 470 BCE, the genius whom the Eleatic philosopher argued against ceased to exist, and even though this genius was defeated by the subsequent culture, he has shared in the glory of so many of the defeated: to have surreptitiously triumphed by penetrating the sphere of winners. We wish to emphasize that the philosophers of Being and of Thinking have never been able to eliminate the Word that, if nothing else, has always been a requisite mediator. We are obviously referring to Heraclitus of Ephesus (544–480 BCE), and his intuition of the role of *logos* as thought and word at once.

Parmenides, as modified by Plato and Aristotle, certainly persists past Hegel until running aground in Nietzsche and Heidegger. In fact, from Parmenides on, speech becomes secondary in predominant Western culture (though not among the people), until the modern era. The word yields to the idea, *logos* to *eidos*, although the late Plato (*Theaetetos*, 189e ff.), after *Kratylos*, does not want to separate *dianoeisthai* (the soul's thinking) from *dialegesthai* (the soul's silent conversation with itself); nevertheless, because of his metaphysics, Plato will later degrade the spoken word to an imperfect copy of the internal word.[10] The original *logos* is still both speech and thought. But, more and more, the word becomes auxiliary to thought; it becomes an instrument, and *Homo loquens* believes to be making great progress by becoming *res cogitans*. We can take comfort in thinking that it was a necessary step that had to be taken in order to overcome mythologism, but we have fallen into a rationalism that now also demands to be transcended. There are antecedents for this in Heraclitus; there is a saying traditionally attributed to him that Stobaeus claims comes from Socrates (erroneously, it seems): *psychēs esti logos eautou auxōn*, which has been translated many different ways[11] and which, fortunately, we can translate literally: "The soul's own word is that which increases itself." Namely, the only word that is truly man's own is that which nourishes itself, which

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[8] Cf. a good Spanish translation in C. Eggers Lan, ed., *Los filósofos presocráticos* (Madrid: Gredos, 1986), 1:401–84. Also useful for Heraclitus.

[9] Cf. Toni Badia, "La lingüística computacional des d'una perspectiva catalana," *Revista de Catalunya* 65 (July/August 1992): 11–28, for the later reductionism. The article appears to reduce language to a mere instrument for information, and it gives us strategies for "Catalan's" competitive battle in the economic world. Dare I predict that its defeat is guaranteed?

[10] Cf. the definition of thinking as the soul's silent dialogue with itself (Eggers and Julià); *O mèn entòs tēs psykhês pròs autèn diálogos áneu phōnês* [The wordless dialogue that the soul carries on with itself] (*Sophistes* 263d).

[11] "Propio del alma es un fundamento que se acrecienta a sí mismo" [The soul is a foundation that enlarges itself] (Eggers and Julià); "Der Seele ist der Logos eigen, der sich selber vermehrt" [The Logos is inherent in the soul and multiplies itself] (Capelle); "Der Seele ist eigen das Wort, das sich selbst mehrt" [The soul possesses the word that increases itself] (G. Burckhardt); "Der Seele ist der Sinn eigen, der sich selbst mehrt" [The soul possesses the sense that increases itself] (Diels-Kranz).

possesses vitality in itself; only a self-sufficient *logos* genuinely corresponds to human life, that is to say, the creating word is the *logos* that grows from its own roots.

The creating word is characteristic of man—the rest are imitations. Or perhaps, to be more precise, we could say: soul is that which possesses the creating *logos*; this *logos*, fruitful in itself, belongs to the soul. Furthermore, considering the broader meaning of *psyche*: it is the task of human life to nourish its own word; human life is distinguished by making its words grow: Life creates the word. More simply put, Life speaks.

We find a similar situation in the Indian tradition, when the dispute between thinking (*manas*) and speaking (*vāc*) was determined by Prajāpati, the father of the Gods, in favor of thinking (*SB* I.4.5.8–11). The word then became subordinate to thinking and turned into an instrument (despite the affirmation in *KathU* VI.12 that neither word nor mind is able to grasp ultimate reality). It seems that the great Vedic intuition as told in the hymn to Bṛhaspati has been forgotten:

A man may look and yet never see (the word), a man may listen yet never hear (the word). But to another the word reveals itself freely, like a well-clad woman gives herself to her husband. (*RV* X.71.4)

Let us not forget that the subordination of word to thought is at the root of Western culture's disregard for the body. The body becomes an instrument of the soul, like the word is of thinking, "the ghost in the machine." The ego's will begins to take priority. Everything makes perfect sense: we have denigrated the body because we have underestimated the word.

Let us continue by stating that in criticizing this paradigm we do not wish to fall into a magical conception of language; and that the steps taken in the Greek and Brahmanic traditions to gain freedom from linguistic monism represent a decisive moment in human history. But neither must we forget that all de-mythicizing entails a new re-mythicizing.[12] One extreme does not justify the other—the same way that dialectic materialism is not a balanced response to dualist spirituality.

The paradigm I am trying to present does not mistakenly subordinate word to thought, but rather it presents word as the first manifestation of being. Being is primarily revealed in Word not in Thinking, in *vāc* not in *manas*, in *logos* not in *nous*. Being is free and speaks without having to yield to the preceding laws of thought—whose function is to follow, to trap, or simply to find what reality is and does, following in the footsteps of word.[13] It is thus possible to understand what Śabarācārya says, that it is the word that speaks[14]—an expression that does not find echo in the West until the philosophy of Heidegger.[15]

[12] Cf. my notion of *Ummythologisierung* in response to Bultmann's *Entmythologisierung*: "La demitologizzazione nell'incontro tra cristianesimo e induismo," in *Il problema della demitizzazione*, Archivio di Filosofia, ed. E. Castelli (Padova: CEDAM,) 1–2, 243–66.

[13] Cf. R. Panikkar, "Thinking and Being," in the Festschrift for E. A. Moutsopoulos *Du Vrai, Du Beau, Du Bien* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), 39–42.

[14] Cf. Oth. Gächter, *Hermeneutics and Language in Pūrvamimāmsā* (Dehli: M. Barnarsidass, 1983), 73ff.

[15] M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975). "Dieses Verhältnis [von Sein und Sagen] überfällt das Denken so bestürzend, dass es sich in einem einzigen Wort ansagt. Es lautet: λόγος. Dieses Wort spricht in einem zumal als der Name für das Sein und für das Sagen" [This relationship (between being and saying) overwhelms the mind so disturbingly that it is pronounced in a single word. It reads: λόγος. This word speaks especially as the name for being and saying] (ibid., 185). The frequently quoted sentence is: "Die Sprache ist in ihrem Wesen weder Ausdruck, noch eine Betätigung

It has commonly been held that God spoke, or that it was men who spoke. The word appeared as mere instrument. From this perspective, the hypothesis of the divine origin of language is quite plausible. The linguistic variety of the—until recently—alleged ten thousand existing languages in a population of under eight billion cannot be explained by the theory of evolution.[16] The hypothesis of a God who speaks to man and gives Adam language does not need to wait until the Romantics to prove its plausibility.[17] The greatest difficulty lies in the anthropomorphism of this speaking God. This difficulty is displaced and accumulates in the image of a God who not only needs to speak, but also to create linguistic receptivity in man. But once this has been admitted, then man could learn to speak alone. That is to say, what is truly fundamental is the linguistic phenomenon itself. It is not enough for God to speak; it is also necessary for man to understand the word.

This is why both Heidegger and Gadamer, for example, will do without a speaking God but not without a super-human nature, a language.[18] Poets have always felt that the soul of the word is super-human—this happens both in a "sacred secularity" interpretation, as in Gottfried Benn, and within a more traditionally religious background, as in Franz Werfel.

Benn says,

Ein Wort—ein Glanz, ein Flug, ein Feuer,
ein Flammenwurf, ein Sternenstricht—
und wiedr Dunkel, ungeheuer,
im leeren Raum um Welt und Ich.[19]

Werfel sings,

Sprache ist an uns ergangen
Vor des Lebens wann und Wo.
Unser Geist bleibt eingefangen
Ewiglich im A und O.[20]

But there is no need to follow this line of thought now; it is enough to have addressed the main idea.

Let us attempt to express this fundamental intuition through three illustrations.

First: If in the beginning was the Word, this means that the big bang was not in the beginning. The big bang could have occurred at the start of our temporal cycle, but we are concerned with something much more fundamental here. It is the intuition that Being is Word, that the ultimate structure of reality is the Word, to be precise, that it is a relationship,

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des Menschen. Die Sprace spricht" [In its essence language is neither an expression nor an activity of man. Language speaks.] (ibid., 19).

[16] As G. Steiner already points out: *After Babel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 49ff.

[17] Cf. the monumental work in six volumes (4 Bände) and 2,320 pages by Arno Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957–1963).

[18] Cf. H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), *passim*, and also "Man and Language" (1966), translated in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 59–81.

[19] *Lyrik—Auswahl letzer Hand* (apud Werner Kohlschmidt in W. Strolz, ed., *Schöpfung und Sprache* [Freiburg: Herder, 1979], 216).

[20] "Legende von der Sprache" (first verse), *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12: *Das lyrische Werk*, III Hymnarium (apud Strolz, op. cit., 122). Strolz's entire book is worth reading. "Jedes Hören setzt ein Sprechen voraus, wie jeder höhere Zuspruch in der Sprache das Unaussprechliche umkreist" (G. Baumann, op. cit., 151).

the radical relativity between Speaker, Interlocutor, Sound, and Meaning. This is what the first philosophical interpretation of the *Vedas*, the *mīmāṃsā*, says, followed by the philosophers of language of the same tradition.[21] Then a whole series of problems, such as those of a separate God, creation, the origin of language, and so on, collapse under their own weight. Put more coarsely: there is no egg without a chicken or a chicken without an egg. A speaker without a word is as much an abstraction as a word without a speaker—or without a sound.

Second: If the Word does not say only that which is previously thought, if it does not simply follow Thought, but rather says what Being is, and by saying It, manifests It, then we truly lay the foundation of the reign of freedom. Being is not, nor does it become, according to the laws of Thinking; Being is under no obligation to follow the path laid out by Thought, rather, by simply being, It creates its own path, which Thought will later (a posteriori) have to follow. Neither humanity's nor reality's destinies are predetermined, nor are they consequences of an idea, not even of *the* Idea; rather they are the unsuspected and unexpected exclusion of Life. It is what I have called the cosmotheandric intuition.[22] Being becomes by being, that is, by speaking. And thinking later *tells us* what being is. Being is not Thinking. Thinking is a secondary operation.[23] The first epiphany of Being is speech. The only thing *Homo cogitans* does is mix data together (*cogitare a co-agitare*, as in Latin saying goes); *Homo faber* merely constructs with the materials he is offered; *Homo sapiens* enjoys himself and takes pleasure in life; *Homo loquens* (not to be mistaken with *Homo loquax*, and which implies thinking, doing, and enjoying) participates in the very activity of Being. He partakes, humanly, in the fulfillment of reality.

Third: I believe the great difficulty the discursive mind has in admitting the primacy of the word is the following:

The word is only word when it is spoken. It is not a simple abstraction; it is a trinity among interlocutors who interchange something of themselves that is simultaneously spiritual (meaning) and material (sound). The word is the quaternity that we defined at the beginning. It is the complete relationship. However, if this relationship is not grasped in its primacy, where the actual terms of the relationship originate from, then the latter are taken to be the foundation instead of the other way around. We have two ways of grasping reality here, the intuitive and the discursive. The word can only be primal, if the primality belongs to the relationship, not to the substance. If divinity is Trinitarian or reality *pratītya-samutpāda*,

[21] Cf. disregarding primary sources, as well as the studies we will mention later on: G. Sastri, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning* (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1959); M. Biardeau, *Théorie de la connaisance et philosophie de la parole dans le brahmanisme classique* (Paris: Mouton, 1964); J. L. Mehta, ed., *Language and Reality*, Proceedings of the All-India Seminar, BHU (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1968); H. G. Coward and K. Kunjunni Raja, eds., *The Philosophy of the Grammarians*, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, ed. K. Potter, vol. 5 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); B. K. Matilal, *The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990). Some knowledge, even if elemental, of Indian reflections on language seems to me almost indispensable nowadays to break through the cultural dead-end into which the nominalism of our current technocratic culture has led us.

[22] Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993). Now in Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

[23] Cf. what Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy wrote in *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1963), 1:730: "*Sprechen.* 'Es bedeutet ja nicht, das zu sagen, was man denkt. Vielmehr haben wir daran festgehalten, dass wir deshalb denken müssen, weil wir etwas zu sagen haben werden. . . .

Sprechen heisst an der gesellschaftichen Bewegung teilnehmen und zu ihr beisteuern'" [*To speak.* This does not mean saying what we think. Rather we keep in mind that we should think so that we will have something to say . . . Speaking means taking part in the movement of society and helping to direct it].

then the word can be primal. This word, which is the beginning, makes all monisms, monotheisms, and monocracies impossible.

Let's not fool ourselves. A reflection on the word leads us, as the Rig Veda specifies, to the very limits of the universe (*RV* I.164.34–35).

In summary: the word creates reality. The word "reality" itself reveals this (from *res*, thing, cause, property, wealth, possession).[24] But we shall not plunge into metaphysical depths right now by stating that reality is "linguisticality." We would like to repeat that the Parmenidian paradigm presents the forgetting of the word meaningfully, the forgetting of *logos*. The unity that Heraclitus maintains is broken with Parmenides, with whom thinking becomes independent from speaking and language becomes the lackey of thought. In a saying that I may be extrapolating but that I consider prophetic, Lluís Duch tells us that "the Word must return from its exile."[25]

The Cosmic Word: The Word and the Thing

Atha avyāhrtam
vā idam āsīt
MaitU VI.6[26]

That being is linguistic and even linguisticality, that things are crystallized words, that the actual etymology of thing (*cosa*) suggests, that the soul of the thing is its word, that he who knows the word has certain dominion over the thing, that giving your word is the strongest bond that man can commit to, that the word is a sacrament; all of this, so pleasant and so true, turns into a crisis when man realizes that he not only learns how to speak by listening, but that it is also through speaking that he does things and creates situations. "The word is, or should be, the reduplication of its content."[27] The thing may be the name, but the name in the mouth of man acquires an autonomy that makes pure linguistic magic no longer correspond to human experience: the name does not make the thing; words are free in regard to things.[28] There may be a relationship, but it is not one of identity; neither is it fixed nor, by

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[24] The word *cosa*, which comes from the Latin *causa* (of unknown etymology) and is equivalent to the Latin *res*, the German *Ding*, and the English *thing*, offers us a fascinating picture, both phonetically as well as semiotically, semantically, and etymologically. I suspect that human speech (cause, public thing, decisions by the assembly) is the sequence that unifies the Indo-European roots *rē* (property, cf. Vedic *rayi*, wealth, both spiritual and material) and *ten* (dilate, stretch, cf. *tantra, tempus, Zeit*), which are the base of some very complex crossovers. We are referring to the German *Ursache* (primal thing) to say *cause*, the French *causer* (directly from the Latin *causari*, carry out a process, plead, defend a cause, intercede), to speak, to chat. Cf. the corresponding entries in the *Diccionario de Coromines* and Heidegger's conclusion: "Die Frage: Was ist ein Ding? Ist die Frage: wer is der Mensch?" [The question: What is a thing? Is the question: What is man?] (*Die Frage nach dem Ding* [1962; Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1975], 189).

[25] *Transparència del món i capacitat sacramental* (Montserrat: Abadia, 1988), 265. Cf. the entire chapter on theology's lost languages ("Llenguatges oblidats en teologia"). "That which characterizes our time . . . is the *generalized crisis of diverse languages*, which allow man to *say* and to *say-himself*" (ibid., 239). And with good reason he speaks to us of "man's polyglotism" (ibid., 240).

[26] Literally: "Then the unuttered truly was." That is: "Then this (world) was truly unuttered"; that is: "This [the world] had not yet been uttered." Or, in other words, "Reality was not yet articulated." It was Prajapati (Lord of creation) who spoke and thus created the world.

[27] Ferdinand Ebner, *Schriften* (Munich: Kösel, 1963), 1:948.

[28] The *Nyayasutra* already states that words have three meanings (*artha*): the individual thing (*vyakti*), its form or figure (*ākr̥ti*), and the universal (*jāti*); this theory is naturally contested by *mīmāṃsā*—which

any means, immutable. A blasphemy may trigger the ire of the Gods, but it may also cause a burst of laughter or be lost in the wind.

Every-thing has a name, and every word refers to some-thing; that is why they are words (*mots*): because they break the silence (*mutisme*) of the thing, we could add, again playing with their etymology.[29] But as Heraclitus already saw, even before the Vedas, this relationship is not purely arbitrary.

Words refer to things, to contents of experience. But this experience can function on three levels: the sensible, the intellectual, and the spiritual; or, inspired by Plato, we could call them *ta aisthēta, ta noēta, ta mystika*. Each word has a sensible content, which may be predominant or more or less latent. The stone, I can touch; hatred, I can deduce from behavior; angels, I accept as entities that have left a sensible trace that I cannot otherwise explain.

Each word also has intellectual content: I understand the stone differently from how a cat understands it, and I think of it as matter and mass; I can formulate a theory about hatred, and I can create an entire angelology about angels.

Each word also contains a reference to the mystery (be it transcendent or immanent). As it reveals what it says, it also shows us that it conceals something else. Strictly speaking, speech is probably the first gate toward the experience of transcendence. Words are bottomless. Every word *says* more than it expresses. The stone is a physical and metaphysical mystery; hatred is real, and, as an evil, at the same time incomprehensible; angels are messengers of mysteries much more than of news. He who speaks, deep down, never knows everything he is saying, or everything that is spoken.

We can differentiate as much as we want between *Bedeutung, Sinn, referent, meaning, significant*, and so on, as has been done in modern times. Ultimately, the relationship between the referent and the word constitutes one of the universal problems of human thought.[30] Here we also discover a tripartite scheme: either the word is primal (because it is divine, magic, or simply previous); or the thing is logically previous to the word (which then becomes a conventional sign); or, in the third place, the referent and the word are two poles of a constitutive relationship.

Due to the triumphal rise of modern science and of European nominalism, which has been imposing itself for the past three centuries, the following conviction—fairly widespread in our times—was formed: words are more or less conventional signs, and language is the specifically human means of communication.[31]

What also belongs to the crisis of our time is the *skepsis* of whether this hypothesis, along with the doubts raised by its accompanying philology, should emancipate itself or not, both from monotheistic theology as well as from homocentric anthropology.

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only recognizes universals; Bhartṛhari will later distinguish between *artha-jāti* (universal sense applied to the thing) and *sābda-jāti* (universal word), which has priority. Cf. Angelo Morretta, *La parola e il silenzio* (Rome: Gesualdi, 1970); Harold E. Coward, *The Sphoṭa Theory of Language* (Delhi: M. Banarsidass, 1980); and Gaurinath Sastri, *A Study in the Dialectics of Sphoṭa* (Delhi: M. Banarsidass, 1980), for an introduction to this set of problems.

[29] "Dicimus muttum nullum, i.e., nullum emisseris verbum" [We speak not a murmur, i.e., we utter not a word]. Cf. the interjection *mu* (*mu facere*) from *mutus* (mute) and the Greek *myō* (seal—the lips). Cf. Sanskrit *mūkaḥ* (mute).

[30] Cf. J. Ferrater Mora, "Questiones de palabras," in *Las palabras y los hombres* (Barcelona: Nexos, 1991), 83–117, for a summary of some modern theories. As a point of comparison, R. R. Dravid, *The Problem of Universals in Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), is also interesting.

[31] In spite of my critique of nominalism, I agree with the critique of the antinominalists presented by H. R. Schlette, "Der Nominalismus als Stimulans der Philosophie," in his *Aporie und Glaube* (Munich: Kösel, 1970), 23–35.

Language is not a gift from God (as Hamann, Bonald, and others believed) [how can man understand divine language, if he is not previously a linguistic being?], nor is it a human construction (as Herder thought and as still holds today) [how could human reflexivity create words as of sounds, if man was not previously a linguistic being?].[32]

But what is *logos*, if it is neither God's revelation nor man's creation? The great difficulty is the starting point: either we open ourselves up too easily to a vertical transcendence (God is the specific origin of language) or we close ourselves a-critically in the human individual (and must then resort to an evolution that finds it difficult to explain the leap from the sound-sign to the word-symbol). *Homo loquens* is not (he cannot be) an individual. Speech reveals not only our solidarity with men, between each other (there is no individualistic language), but also with something more than ourselves (the linguistic universe is one where there is man).

It is here that the notion of *apauruṣeyatva* from Vedic hermeneutics of the *mīmāṃsā* makes perfect sense. That the Vedas are *apauruṣeya*, or authorless, does not mean that nobody recited them, created them, or later wrote them down (most of the Vedic hymns are unequivocally ascribed to specific *ṛṣis* or poet-seers). Rather it points to the primality of words that do not need any previous signs, sounds, or meta-words to tell us what they mean. Otherwise, it would be a resource to infinity. Words are words when they embrace the aforementioned quadrinity, that is, when someone says something to someone else through something.

If there were no immediate and primal words, we would not be able to cut through the sound barrier, nor that of meaning.

We may possibly have an interpretative key for a multi-secular problem here. The word is only word—"living word," as Joan Maragall would say—when it includes the thing and the interlocutors that it correlates. Thing and word would not be the same, their relationship is not even bi-univocal—but they are not inseparable: every thing has its word and every word says one thing. We could evoke the triple word of Indian grammarians here: *vaikharī vāc* (spoken word), *madhyamā vāk* (internal, or middle, word), and *paśyanti vāc* (complete, lived, and seen word, which prepares us for the experience of *śabda-brahman* or ultimate linguistic reality: divine or transcendent word).[33]

We say that the relationship between word and referent is constituent. And we repeat that it is not so much so because of the thing as because of the word. There is no word without referent; there is no referent without word. Let us recall Stefan George's beautiful couplet, made famous by Heidegger's commentary:[34]

> "So lernt ich traurig den verzicht:
> Kein ding sei wo das wort gebricht."[35]

Language does not reveal things, just as things are not the "cause" of language. Things are themselves linguistic crystallizations—as their etymology suggests, things reveal themselves to man and to all animals—and possibly to every being. There is communication

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[32] Cf. the admirable prologue by José María Valverde to Wilhem von Humboldt's *Escritos sobre el lenguaje*, trans. A. Sánchez Pascual (Barcelona: Edicions 62-Península, 1991). I find Humboldt's theories still very up to date, and in any case, they represent a necessary step for a critical Western reflection on language.

[33] Cf. Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya* I.142 *et passim*.

[34] M. Heidegger, "Das Wesen der Sprache," in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975), 159–216. Additional comments in "Das Wort," ibid., 217–58.

[35] "So, sadly, I became aware: / That things are not if words aren't there."

between things. But revelation is not the best term if it is interpreted literally, as if things were covered in a veil and unveiling them allowed us to see them. Things are the actual revelation. The thing is when it is unveiled. The language of things is their unveiling. The thing is this unveiling. This is why the symbol is neither purely subjective nor exclusively objective. The symbol is only symbol when it symbolizes, and it only symbolizes when it unveils itself.[36]

The epistemological status of modern science is an altogether different thing. Modern science is not, strictly speaking, a language, but rather an algebra—that is, a system of signs that unequivocally (in as much as possible) refers to repeatable behaviors between things, and that establishes an axiomatic code (between signs) that allows them to relate to each other. The mysterious depth of science consists in the fact that these laws of logic (between signs) also *appear to be* ontological (between things).

We have something very important here. The first linguistic problem that man considers is the relationship between the name and the thing. Adam gave names to all things (Gen 2:19–20); the prophet seers of India, the *ṛṣis*, began to give name to all things (*RV* X.71.1–2). There was no intermediary between the thing and the name. But, as we have already stated, this relationship cannot be one of identity.

Indian reflection inquiries into the ground, *nimitta*, on account of which things are named.[37] This ground (simplifying the enormous complexity of things) is the actual audible and intellectual nature of reality, śabda-*brahman*. This is the secret to understanding the theory of *sphoṭa*. The relationship between meaning and sound, between word-meaning (*artha*) and word-sound (*dhvani*) (which is unified in *sphoṭa*) is what allows us to understand. Understanding, then, is a knowledge that integrates us into reality, that makes us real, that saves us. Everything is coherent.

Hellenic reflection (also simplifying here) introduces a third element: the idea. Names are conventional signs of things, and things, natural signs of ideas. Even if Platonic ideas fade into heaven or land on Earth, within things themselves, we still need linguistic signs to have a certain consistency: mathematics is born as the natural language of reality. We reach Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) (and afterward, all psychological theories of language) and his peer Francis Bacon (1561–1626), followed a generation later by René Descartes (1596–1650). Galileo was thirty-six years old and Descartes almost four when Giordano Bruno was burned to death. The same year Galileo died, Newton was born. Everything is also coherent here. The magic of realism is followed by the magic of nominalism. Metaphysics alone considered itself true, and now we believe physics alone to be the truth. The reality of the word has escaped us. This is the crisis of modernity. We have lost the word.

But we must now concentrate on the issue at hand. Language is the assemblage of relationships between words and things, and our case study is the Catalan language. This brings us to the third chapter and to the main problem: it is not so much about linguistic analysis as about examining what we want to say with language, what it is we have the desire to say.

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[36] I cannot summarize here what I have tried to explain in other writings. Cf. *Le mystère du culte* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), and "Per una lettura transculturale del símbolo," *Quaderni di psicoterapia infantile* no. 5 (1981): 53–123 (with discussion). Now in Volume VII of this *Opera Omnia*.

[37] The Word *nimitta* (which possibly comes from *ni* and the root *mā*-), measure (*mens, mensura, mind*) generally means landmark, mark, signal; and for semantic reasons: cause, motive, reason, ground. It also often means omen, premonition, augur. That which allows us to measure, that is, to adjust ourselves to a certain thing. I put it forward as an example of the power of words.

Human Speech: Speaking and Thinking

Puruṣasya vac rasaḥ[38]
CU I.1.2

Without losing sight of the subject of our symposium, we will divide our considerations into three sections: anthropological (*animal loquens*), cultural (*The Crisis of Writing*), and Catalan speech.

Animal loquens

Any inquiry into the nature of language must use language to give a more or less intelligible answer. Furthermore, one cannot answer any question leaving language aside. Articulated in this manner, it may sound like a tautology, since "question" is already something made of words and thus can only be answered with words. But the problem has only been displaced: Can we be men without speaking? That is to say, can we think without speaking?

Man is a thinking being; he cannot separate his being from his speech: *Homo loquens.* Speech identifies him. No other being we know of speaks. I repeat that I understand speech or language as something more than communication through signs.[39] Animals, and practically all beings, communicate. Heat is communicative. All bodies receive the message of heat and respond in turn. Communication is a universal phenomenon. There is in man, however, something more.

Man uses articulated sounds that bear not only messages but also meaning, that, in short, we can refer to as intellectual meaning or even concepts. Concepts are fruits conceived by the mind and expressed in words. The words that man uses are pregnant with meaning.

Human beings not only emit sounds, they also articulate words in such a way that every word carries a meaning; they also bring words together in such a way so as to form sentences that convey different meanings (and in a certain way superior) to those of isolated words.

The most prominent characteristic of human speech consists in the inseparability of language and thought. In fact, one does not exist without the other. Deep down, we find ourselves in the presence of a tautology, necessarily so because this is an essential question. A word empty of thought would not be a word, merely a sound. A thought without words cannot even be an object of consciousness. If I have or entertain a thought without knowing it, not only can I not speak of it, I cannot even know if it is a thought. A thought conscious of itself is already a linguistic event, for the mere fact of being conscious of itself. If I merely thought, I could know nothing, not even what I thought. If I do not formulate it, I cannot know it. If I am conscious that I think (or that I have thought), that is, if I know I think, this knowledge is not only expressible (and, therefore, linguistic), but it is also the expression (it is language). *Reflexivity is language first.* We speak when we know what we say, even if we do not necessarily understand it.[40]

The concept is the word without sound, as the ancients said. But language is not only the revelation of things, it also reveals the speaker, it reveals he who speaks. It reveals the *loquens*

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[38] "The essence of man is the Word."

[39] "Language is a *potentiality* ... which materializes or is updated in the *speech* of each one of the individuals of the linguistic community" (T. Badia, op. cit., 12 [emphasis added]).

[40] Cf. my study "The Unknown Knower," in the Festschrift for André Mercier, *Réflexions sur la liberté humaine*, ed. M. Svilar (Bern: Lang, 1988): "Linguisticality expresses Consciousness and Consciousness is revealed in linguisticality" (146).

who says and thinks things. But this revealing speech is not a soliloquy, it is not only speaking: it is communication, it is personal language. Man is person, that is to say, interrelationship, communion of language, personal communion.

This is why the world of the word is the quintessential human world. It is the place where humans communicate humanly among themselves.[41]

Each word is a mystery insofar as it *says* the universe. The word *rose*, for example, awakens, says, reveals, not only everything that it is "in-itself" (which is already an abstraction), but also everything that it really *is* "in-everything," because it holds a constitutive relationship with the entire universe: the earth, the seed, expiration, beauty, life, death, oneness, the sun, the rain, the planets, the places of heaven, the form. . . .

The word *rose* says even more than the "rose": it is I who pronounces it and, therefore, it also includes me; it is I who says "rose" and not *rodon* [Greek] or *japā* (*jav puāpam, japā puspam*) [Sanskrit], it is I who find myself wrapped up in a complete linguistic and cultural universe that evokes for me an entire universe (centered on the rose). In addition, it is I who says it, but not to myself alone—rather to a "you," to a "we"; and the same word connects us in a complete "we" for which the word holds meaning, or more precisely, a constellation of meanings: colors, smells, senses, concepts, metaphors, feelings, connotations . . . *dhvani*.

Strictly speaking, the word *rose* is not a mere noun: it is a noun loaded with adjectives (rose-colored, *rosats*); but it is also a verb, an action. The word rose *roses* (*roseja*), to put it a certain way: it goes from the rose to me, to us, and from us to the rose; there is a full transitive and intransitive action between the rose and everything that the rose "roses": we imagine it, we smell it, we cut it, we offer it, we speak to it, it speaks to us, it fascinates us, it attracts (or repels) us, it makes us remember, it stirs up our emotions (to the extent of being able to disturb us because of fated sentimentalisms). The word *rose* excludes the *imaginal* world of Iranian philosophers according to Henry Corbin's Aristotelian-Avicennian interpretation.[42] The rose is never alone. Even the purest nominalism must include a *tenemus* to the "name of the rose": *stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*.[43] Turning to the poets is not "(poetic) license," but rather strict linguistic rigor:

> "I jo m'he dit: construiré la rosa
> del pensament amb pètals
> de flaire suggerida; no cobegís
> la flor—no som en el jardí—n camina
> quietament pel viarany ombrós,
> a voltes fulgurant, de les paraules."[44]

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[41] Cf. the original reflections of contemporary African philosophers in the various acts of the philosophical weeks of Kinshasa, especially *Langage et philosophie*, Recherches philosophiques africaines, no. 6 (Kinshasa: Faculté de Théologie catholique, 1981).

[42] Cf. H. Corbin, *Temple et contemplation* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), which posthumously summarizes five studies presented at Eranos.

[43] "Yesterday's rose endures in its name; we have only bare names." Expression of the twelfth-century Benedictine monk Bernardus Morlanensis (from Morlas) in his book *De contemptu mundi*, popularized by Umberto Eco's novel *Il nome della rosa* (Milan, 1980). Cf., among many, the commentary by H. R. Schlette, "Nur noch nackte Namen . . . ," in his *Konkrete Humanität* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1991), 360–68.

[44] J. Vinyoli, "El callat," in *Poesies Completes* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1975).

Not to mention Eckhart, Jacopone da Todi, Angelus Silesius, and the countless Oriental poets of the rose.[45]

Every authentic word is a revelation, an unveiling of reality. But the veil that falls off the thing drops on us and covers us in the thing when we truly understand the word. This is why we are told to be weary of "empty"[46] words, because by our words we are acquitted and by our words we are condemned (Mt 12:36–37).

Words are like the breath of things. That is why *logos* and *pneûma* go together. Things exhale, they blow their breath to the four dimensions. This breath is liquefied in words. Words are the condensation of breath, of the spirit of things.

Man is the great mediator, the priest between Heaven and Earth. This is why he betrays his own nature when he interferes egotistically, when he becomes an intermediary instead of a mediator, the mediator between the cosmic and the divine—even if this constituent mediation is not his only one. Reality is not a pyramid, but rather a type of ellipse with three focal points in complete correlation. The divine is also mediator between man and things, the same way the latter are mediators between man and God. This is the cosmotheandric vision to which I have already referred.

This is why geography—or, more exactly, the ground, space, and time incarnated in things—belongs as much to man as to the word. Every word is an incarnation. If there is no body, there is no word; if there is no concrete Earth, a limited space, and a determined time, there is no word. The Catalan word cannot be a timeless abstraction or an exact replica uprooted from some saying or from some machine "made in the USA" and sold here through a multinational company. Computers do this much more efficiently.

But the word *rose* and all the universe it *says* (Being) does not exhaust what it can say; better yet, it does not *say* what it cannot say: the Silence that allows it to be the word, the No-Thing that allows it to reveal Being, the śūnyata that lies not behind it, but rather *in* it. Words do not say silence; it is silence that allows them to speak, that allows them to be, to be words. As the experience of No-Thing remains a great weakness of Western thought, so the loss of silence also degenerates the word.[47]

This means that, if everything has a name, everything is also without a name, anonymous. And this anonymity that accompanies every name and, therefore, everything is the mystery of the thing, its No-Thing. Being can be, to a certain extent, investigated and known. It is even possible to think a Being transparent to itself: this would be the Omniscient Being of monotheism. For It, that is, for the Supreme Being, there would be no mystery.

Well, then, the No-Thing, the Emptiness, the śūnyata that accompanies Being corresponds to its dimension of mystery—*quoad se*. Every being is mysterious because Being is so—in itself and also for itself. *Logos*, including divine *logos*, is the word. But the Word has an Origin: Silence, Mystery, No-Thing; and it also has a culmination in the thing, in Matter,

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[45] Cf. especially regarding the European tradition, Gerd Heinz-Mohr and Volker Sommer, *Die Rose: Entfaltung eines Symbols* (München: Diederichs, 1988).

[46] The word *argos*, which is usually translated as useless or idle, that does nothing, is a contraction of *a-ergos*, without energy, without force, without power. Let us not forget that words say nothing if he who speaks them or he who listens to them does not confer or attribute power to them. Let us imagine a tape recorder reproducing a discourse that nobody hears; it is like the book that nobody reads.

[47] I believe the reflections of the Kyoto School on "emptiness," which, naturally, follow the Buddhist tradition, are essential for a reevaluation of the word. Cf. the translation of Nishitani Kenji's *Religion and Nothingness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), also published in German: *Was ist Religion?* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1986), and Tanabe Hajime's *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

in that dimension of reality to which it merely points, intentionally, but that it cannot violate and must respect.

I do not wish to continue now with the much discussed issue of thinking and speaking. I only wish to repeat that which we have been saying, that is, that their relationship is constituent and, I would add, a-dualist; in such a way that they can be distinguished, though not separated—and not only psychologically as the work of Vygotskij proves, but also anthropologically.[48] I wish to reflect on one more case that deserves increasing attention, especially today: the crossing of linguistic boundaries.[49]

Translation is the door through which, perhaps in the simplest way, we can penetrate into the experience of the polarity between thought and word.

In fact, translation wishes to communicate (say) the "message" of the original work (we can call it its thought process, which naturally includes beauty, rhythm, feeling, etc.) by means of another language. It is a *transducere, trans-lation, Über-setzung*, and, ideally, a re-creation of the original in a new environment.

If word and thought were identical, there would be no possible translation. The thought that the individual thinks is, as such, incommunicable. In order to communicate it to my interlocutor—even to myself—I must translate it into word. For another to understand my thoughts, he must perform a reverse translation: from the word he hears, listens to, to the thought he understands, assimilates. The normal means to communicating thought is the word. There is as much intralinguistic translation as there is interlinguistic translation.

If thought and word were absolutely different, there would also be no possible translation. In order to know that thoughts m, n, and p are represented by the locutions a, b, and c, I need a third system x, y, and z to relate them. But this third system cannot be either thought or word, because we would then have a *regressus ad infinitum*. One could "think" that it is a simple, sensible demonstration. But, aside from this only being possible with material, that is sensible, nouns, it must be understood as a relational system between thought and word, which is impossible without intellectual interpretation, that is, without thought. Ultimately, x, y, z would simultaneously be meta-words and metathoughts: they would be word thoughts, verbal thoughts, the identification between word and thought, which goes against our hypothesis.

In the end, translation is not the area of expertise of "translators." All speech, because it is speech, surpasses limits. Speech itself opens us up to transcendence in the fullest sense: it opens us up to the ineffable and the unprecedented; it allows us to communicate with others and with ourselves; it relates us to the past and launches us off to the future. All speech is creation, imitation, and translation. The three things at once: it creates because when we speak we do not repeat; it imitates because when we speak we do not invent, even if we choose the perspective from which we imitate; it translates because it transports the present situation of the speaker and the materials available to him someplace new.[50]

[48] Cf. L.-S. Wygotskyj, *Denken und Sprechen* (1934; Stuttgart: Fischer, 1969) (translation from the original Russian). His thesis is that speaking and thinking are two different functions of consciousness that fraternize within man's communal praxis. "Das Bewusstsein spiegelt sich im Wort. . . . Das sinnvolle Wort ist der Mikrokosmos des Bewusstsein" [Awareness is reflected in the word . . . A meaningful word is the microcosm of awareness].

[49] Cf. the bibliography selected by G. Steiner in the abovementioned book, which starts with Schleiermacher in 1813 and extends to 1973. A different bibliography is given in a more practical than theoretical book by Valentín García Yebra, *Teoría y práctica de la traducción*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Gredos, 1982).

[50] Cf. Rosenstock-Huessy, op. cit., especially the chapter titled "Des Individuums Recht auf Sprache," 1:711–35, which finishes saying, "Alle Sprache setzt voraus, dass wir alle zusammen ein einziges Wesen

The only thing left for us to say is that the relationship between thought and word is not extrinsic. This is why we need an intrinsic union to relate them. But neither is it bi-univocal, it is not even a fixed relationship. Thought and word are not *in* relation, they themselves *form* the relationship. Thought *is* a relationship to word, and the word *is* insofar as it relates to thought.

There is one consequence to the definition of man as *animal loquens* that I would like to point out: the inhumanity of war. Life, and human life is no exception, entails conflict; we do not need Heraclitus to remind us that tensions and dissensions generate human activity. Men fight, but the most characteristic human battle is verbal: linguistic debate, dialectic controversy.

Against the warfaring, armed Crusades Ramon Llull proposed "prediction," which meant dialectics—the word, a linguistic debate that relied on the fact that man is a speaking being (which does not mean merely rational). "An anthropology of man insofar as he is word," is what Ramon Llull proposed.[51]

That men fight with arms, as if they were superanimals, instead of fighting with the ultimate human weapon represents human degradation.[52] Neglecting the word has led to war.

The Greeks and Hebrews have given us many examples of the power of words. In the same spirit, the *Rāmáyaṇa*, through what the vulture Supárśva tells his father in order to justify the fact that he did not avenge the death of his brother (when he wanted to abduct Sítā) by killing Rāvaṇa, says: "There is no being on the Earth, even among the most depraved, who wounds those who come near (are armed) with conciliatory words."[53]

The Crisis of Writing

When Pythagoras's son returned from banishment, he presented an offering of gratitude in the temple of Hera (a brazen tablet measuring two square feet) bearing the following inscription:

> "Me, Arimnestes, who much learning traced,
> Pythagoras's beloved son here placed."[54]

Hellenic culture, which lives on in our civilization, emerged from the secrets hidden in these words. This same civilization, which began in Sumer, Babylon, and Egypt, is the one that is now in crisis. And this is the *Sitz im Leben* of current Catalan language. A "fundamental reflection" on Catalan cannot be reduced to an exclusive analysis of idioms or phonemes. It must include the speakers, the individuals who speak in Catalan at this particular moment of our geography and history.

Limiting ourselves to Western culture and consciously proceeding by leaps and bounds, we could affirm that all major historical changes have been accompanied by linguistic revolutions. I would even dare to state that the Word was not only at the Beginning, but rather that it has been at the beginning of each civilization. The Word creates culture.[55]

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verkörpern" [Every language assumes that all of us together incorporate a single being].

[51] J. Delàs in *Qüestions de Vida Cristiana* 161 (April 1992): 24.

[52] The etymology of *batalla* is uncertain, but its first meaning seems to be that of quarrel or dispute, that is, a linguistic *duel*.

[53] *Ram.* IV.59.16.

[54] Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, p. 27, from the translation by Miguel Periago Lorente (Madrid: Gredos, 1987), which in a footnote says, "Apparently, the secrets were musical." English translation by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (University of Wisconsin, 1919).

[55] In May 1990 the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Pisa (which retains its

Socrates introduced the great revolution of the conceptual word by giving dialectics a new twist.

The great Christian revolution was also the revelation of the Word that "was at the Beginning" (Jn 1:1) that "made all of the things" (Jn 1:3; Heb 1:3) and that invites us to proclaim it. The (apocryphal, but ancient) *Acts of John* (99) say the same thing:

"This cross [of light], then, is that which fixed all things apart by the word."[56]

The Renaissance was driven by a passion: "sacred philology," sacred love of the word. This is why they took up Latin and Greek authors again and why they gave great impulse to the vernacular languages that emerged from Latin. Dante, who defended native dialects, is an important example.[57] The Renaissance was not cultural archaeology; on the contrary, it was much more a new discovery of the word.[58] Theology, Erasmus said, must be founded on grammar[59] (where grammar does not have the sense of artificiality that Dante gives it).

Protestantism was also a reencounter with the Word, both with the vernacular (we are thinking of the literary genius of Luther) as well as with that which they called "the Word of God."

Romanticism was, again, a linguistic renovation. It was fascinated by the new languages Europe discovered, and by narrative in general.

Awareness of language in the present moment also carries this prediction of a new era.[60]

This symposium would like to be mindful of this situation. It has a very specific and immediate cause: the precarious condition of the Catalan language. But we would like to place our considerations within the general framework of the consciousness of a new period for humanity. Specifically, it is a reflection of the universal, and the concern for so-called minority languages is beginning to be shared not only by the interested parties but also by others. But this period appears to close a circle—the period that Plato so vividly describes

name to this day) organized an interdisciplinary seminar on "La parola creatice in India e nel Medio Oriente," which showed up to what point these cultures consider the word as creator of reality. The acts were published, supervised by Caterina Conio.

[56] (Apocryphal) *Acts of John*, 99: *Oûtos oûn o staurôs [phôtos] o diapêxámenos tà pánta logô* (apud *Il Cristo*, vol. 1: *Testi teologici e spirituali dal I al IV secolo*, ed. Antonio Orbe (Fondazione L. Valla i Mondadori, 1985), 112. English translation by M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

[57] Cf. Dante in *De vulgari eloquentia*, where he says that vernacular languages are more noble than *grammatical*, that is to say, than Latin. Given the fact that this text is quite obscure, it is worthwhile to summarize the first chapter of the first book. It begins by saying that "as we have not found anyone before us who has worried about the doctrine of the eloquence of the people," he sets out to do it himself. And he explains that he refers to the language, not only of men, but also of women and children. This is the primary language; Latin and Greek are secondary. "More noble than both of these is the vernacular [*nobilior est vulgaris*], in the first place because it was the first used by the human species, second because it is enjoyed across the Earth—despite the fact that it is divided in different speeches and words—and also because it is what comes naturally [*naturalis est nobis*], while the others are more artificial." And he ends the chapter saying that "de hac nobiliori nostra est intention pertractare" [It is this noble vernacular that we intend to discuss]. It is my recommendation that the thirty-three pages of this booklet should be known in Catalan. Cf. *Le opere di Dante*, Testo critico della Società dantesca italiana (Florence: Bemporad, 1921), 319–52.

[58] Cf. for a reevaluation of the Renaissance, Ernesto Grassi, *Einführung in philosophische Probleme des Humanismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), esp. 57–58.

[59] Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 152ff.

[60] This is how Paul Ricoeur begins his article on language in the *Enciclopaedia Universalis*, and the same is done by Karl-Otto Apel in the *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe* (Munich: Kösel, 1974), 3:1383. Both of these articles are important.

when he speaks of the discovery of writing, and that seems to enter into a profound crisis in our times.

Socrates's speech in *Phaedrus* (274–276) is still exceptionally compelling. It concerns the Egyptian king Thamus's commentary when facing the discovery of writing by the god Thoth. That is where the great literary revolution begins. The living word begins to be replaced by the written word.[61]

"You mean the living word of knowledge—Phaedrus asks him—which has a soul, and of which the written word is properly no more than an image?" "Yes, of course that is what I mean," answers Socrates. This process seems to reach its culmination today because of the actual paralysis produced by the written word. As an example we can mention the fact that in the United States alone, fifty-two thousand pages of original writing are published every day in different scientific magazines.[62] It is materially impossible to read everything that is written even within the most specialized subfield of any discipline, be it scientific or humanist. We are approaching an endpoint. And all this is also a linguistic problem.

When modern man says: *word* (*parasula*), he generally imagines an *isolated word*, usually a noun; and he almost always thinks of a *written word*, generally thinking of phonetic writing.[63] We could call it *the alphabetization of the word*, which, according to Ivan Illich, began in the West in the twelfth century.[64] It is the transition from monastic to Scholastic reading: the appearance of the *text*. Reading is no longer the search for wisdom or a reading of the book of nature or of God, but rather an investigation into the opinions of the authors (into the things they articulate).[65]

We no longer read, as we did until the twelfth century and similarly to the Vedic and Brahmanic traditions, to obtain salvation, as a pilgrimage through the universe of man, but rather to inform ourselves and to "know."[66]

The words of the modern era are creations of the alphabet. There is no word for "word" in primitive Greek. In point of fact, the alphabet is an elegant technique for the visualization of sounds.[67] In this way, words become the atoms of discourse.[68]

But speech is not writing, just as the alphabet is not language. During the 650 years of Roman control of the Mediterranean region, nobody thought of transcribing spoken languages into Roman characters. And when in 850 Cyril and Methodius translated the Bible for the Bulgarians, they did not invent a language, but rather an alphabet.[69] The letters were not used

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[61] Cf., as an example, the testimony of M. Parets Serra on Kirundi (the language of the Burundi) speech and proverbs, op. cit., 17–33.

[62] One single Sunday edition of the *New York Times* consumes approximately fifty hectares of forest a year. From 1980 to 1990, the surface area of forests on Earth diminished at a rate of 17 million hectares a year, which corresponds to 32 hectares per minute. In 1980 it was 20 hectares per minute. I guess you can say we have progressed!

[63] Cf. José Severino Croatto, *Origen y evolución del alfabeto* (Buenos Aires: Columbia, 1968), for a summary of the issue and sources.

[64] Ivan Illich, *Du lisible au visible* (Paris: Cerf, 1991); translation: *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Illich has also addressed this issue in *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind*, with Barry Sanders (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988).

[65] "With the disassociation between text and the material object on which it is written, nature itself ceased to be an object to be read in order to become an object to be described" (Illich, op. cit., 140).

[66] Cf. two classics: M. D. Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), and J. Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1957).

[67] Illich, op. cit., 51.

[68] Cf. C. Gaudin, *Platon et l'alphabet* (Paris: PUF, 1990).

[69] Cf. Illich, op. cit., 87.

to report what people said. Writing was an instrument, speech was not; it was life. In many ancient texts, words were not separated; only lines existed, and the figure of *anagnôstês*, the reader, is well known since Hellenic antiquity. Classical man did not read; he was read to.[70] And it is significant that the word *anagnôstês* comes from *anagignôskô* and that *anagnôsis* means the action of making known, that is, of reciting, of reading out loud for another.

The word, confused with the alphabetized (and, consequently, written) word, is vulgarly taken as a *means of expression*, even as *the* means of human expression par excellence. The mediator becomes an intermediator.

This is the beginning of language's surrender to writing.

Means signifies instrument, that is, a *mediation*, in the best-case scenario, between man and that which he "wishes" to express, manifest, make known. Language is taken as an instrument, perhaps as the ultimate human instrument.

Before criticizing such an opinion, let us posit a corresponding situation: reason as man's instrument to think or do something. Everything we think or do we do "by means of" reason. What does this mean? That there is someone or something that is not reason that uses reason to carry out certain specific activities also not identifiable with reason. The traditional example is thinking by causes. First the final cause: I (efficient cause) want to build a house and, in addition to using materials (material cause), I use my reason (instrumental cause) in order to determine the plans, to choose the most convenient material and to think of the services I want the house to offer, according to my idea of home (formal cause). Once more, let us take note of the dominance of the will in all of this. An *ego* that identifies with will uses reason as an instrument.

The parallelism is instructive. If man is *animal rationale*, his reason is not an instrument in the hand of an *ego* that handles it at will; rather humanity and rationality are inseparable, even if not quite completely identical. Analogously, if man is *animal loquens*, language is not a mere instrument, but rather belongs to human reason.

But there is more. Neither rationality, which we could call the faculty of thinking, nor linguisticality, which we could call the faculty of speaking, are individual essences; rather they belong to human nature. They are not like our respective bodies, for example, which to a certain extent are incommunicable (and distinctive). If they were individual essences, we would not be able to communicate. Both speech and reason participate in a common rational or linguistic world in which we can understand each other. Plato's world of ideas, Aristotle's agent intellect, Augustine's divine light, followed by the systems of Avicenna, Averroes, Descartes, Kant, Leibniz, and so many others until Hegel, present as many other hypothesis to explain this world, mediator between Heaven and Earth.

No matter which hypothesis flatters us most, the word is in every case indispensable. But this word is the creating word; it is not the written word, that is to say, the alphabetized word, but rather the spoken word. The art of visiting, still alive in Catalonia in the time of our fathers and in almost all human traditions, found a certain substitute in café gatherings, but it has been completely distorted in the interchange of written messages, sometimes even among inhabitants of the same city. African Christians emphasize that Jesus spent his life (at least his public life) visiting people's homes, one by one.

And thus we arrive at our own time, when the spoken word appears to have lost yet another battle, not one with the written word but rather with the computerized word and especially with the image, the word of the mass media, of the ambiguously named mass communication, the word of the technocratic world. And now we reach our final section.

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[70] Cf. Jacques Brunschwig's short reflection: *Le Liseur* in *Penser avec Aristote*, ed. M. A. Sinaceur (Toulouse [Érès]: UNESCO, 1991), 415–17.

Catalan Speech

The letter of invitation to this symposium mentions linguistic egalitarianism, the reduplication of so-called bilingualism, and it insinuates the difficult function of minority languages. Let us try to say something about this.

Why has the word *seny* changed meaning? Why do we no longer say *homen*, and why has the *negu* of the fifteenth century (*Tirant lo Blanc* and Ramon Llull, for example) now become *ningu*?

Grammarians and historians will give us phonetic explanations, or suggest it is due to fashion trends or historical influences. But the questions go further than this: Why have we lost the use of the subjunctive? Why can we no longer tolerate long sentences and dread subordinate clauses? Why do we find appositions confusing and the profusion of adjectives tiring? Nobody is forcing things to be this way. Or is the commandment perhaps much more subtle than if it came from a dictator or an academy? Isn't it more likely that the time we have to listen is limited because we have to get back to work and cannot afford to waste any time? Isn't it more likely that computers and modern life in general demand that we economize, clarify, and not worry about shades of meaning, because after all, we find black-and-white answers more useful, like the bits of a calculator?

Let us proceed by asking: Why do *religion*, *God*, *justice*, *beauty*, *value*, *courage* have so many meanings, and yet today they do not "say" what they said a century ago? Why does the word remain, even after the meaning changes, instead of there being a new word? Are we sure that *mercadejar* means "marketing"?

Language changes, they tell us, because customs change, new influences come into play, and history changes. Language is a mirror of how the people who speak it, in a given time and place, hear, see, and live the world. To want to modify the evolution of language is equivalent to wanting to change the course of history. But the relationship is bi-univocal: to change the history of a people is equivalent to modifying their language.

We are told of the many manipulators of languages subject to the pressures of mass media, dominated by propaganda and controlled by that which is "profitable." It is all a complex circle. They manipulate language because they manipulate men, and they dominate men, because they dominate history: they have power. They have power because they have conquered it. And they have conquered it because they have been more skillful at knowing and following the dynamism of the present culture; they have followed trends, but they have also created them.

Everything is multivalent and goes in double direction; but there is something: *Zeitgeist* as Hegel would call it; *Seingeschick* according to Heidegger's description; that which is *atmospheric*, as some Japanese and Western philosophers would translate it; the *signs of the time*, as the Gospels already mentioned—*culture* would be a relatively modern equivalent. It is not a vicious cycle, because there is an element of freedom. But this freedom does not rest exclusively on the individual. It is also found in the stars.

Let us put it more clearly. What is the destiny of Catalan? The language will follow the destiny of the people, but the people will also follow the adventure of the language. This is the circle of life that I referred to when I said it was not a vicious cycle. It is not so much worrying about *how* people speak, but rather *what* they speak about, what they think they want to say; not so much about how they will say things, but rather about what those things are they will want to say, and they will want to say creatively.

Saying that languages deteriorate because technocracy rejects subtleties and aspects of reality that no longer influence people's daily experiences does not explain why this same

technocracy is able to impose itself so universally. The hundreds of words there are for "camel" in Arabic are disappearing, while dozens of brand names and car models are being introduced. The destiny of a language depends on the destiny of history. The defeated know this well enough.

It is fair to say, along with Heidegger, that the way of thinking dominated by the principle of sufficient reason is responsible, and that this is the necessary presupposition for the birth and development of modern science. It is also convenient to hear him saying that this principle, first formulated by Leibniz in the seventeenth century, had an incubation period of twenty-three centuries.[71] The question remains: Why has history followed this course and not another?

Our specific question about Catalonia is the following: is it utopian, unrealistic, and at least in the short run, counterproductive to want to "save," "reform," "perfect," "preserve" Catalan against the technologization of the world that entails reducing language to mere "computer science"? Or must we participate in technological competitiveness and not stop until we call the "angular momentum" of an elemental particle at rest *barrina* or *giravolta*? I am obviously referring to the *spin*. A book of modern physics in genuine and autochthonous Catalan either makes us laugh (and is unintelligible) or makes us cry (and is redundant, aside from costly); and within a year, it is already obsolete.

I said "reducing" language to computer science in order to be as neutral as possible. I should have spoken of "reductionism" or "transformation." And this is a critical dilemma because being satisfied with the fact that we tolerate "redoubts"—that is, "reductions" of poets and elites (like the ones from Paraguay before, or the ones referred to as "sanctuaries" in North America today)—is equivalent to accepting language as "folklore," on the one hand, and as computer science, on the other. This is equivalent to completely giving in. In fact, thanks to newspapers, we have already become accustomed to the idea that neither politics, nor science, nor urban development, nor history is "culture." This term appears to be reserved for the "fine arts" or "fine letters" (patriarchic expressions such as "belle époque," "belletrística," etc. are significant enough).

The dilemma cleaves into the very nature of language. Either language is the means that man has to communicate messages—and the only important messages, these days, seem to be economic ones, coated, of course, as techno-science and even as part of the commerce of works of art; or language is that which we have been describing up to now: the human way of living. The difficulty lies in the compromise, because any compromise represents abandoning language in the sense I have presented.

My option is clear. This type of reflection on language goes in the opposite direction from the analysis of "what is said." Let us not forget that *ordinary language* means the English of the metropolis, especially when this was most powerful, just as Noam Chomsky's generative grammar is not applicable to a great portion of Oriental languages. So-called ordinary language analyzes what happens to the group who we recognize in power or toward whom we wish to extend our patronage, and it represents a collaborationist attitude toward the status quo, something very legitimate, by the way, but that in any case should be done consciously.

The people of India (to avoid rather uncomfortable European examples) are supposedly pacifists, yet they react violently when their linguistic problems are mentioned—problems that are still unresolved after almost half a century of independence. They are conscious that language creates culture, and that speech is the manifestation of a people's creativity. They do not want to be a translated people, that is, betrayed in the depths of their identity.

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[71] Cf. M. Heidegger, *Der Satz von Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1971), *passim*, esp. 161.

We speak when we have something to say, not only when we feel the need to inform. Man is *animal loquens* because he speaks and doesn't merely relay information, like a television transmitter. Having something to say is more than having something to repeat. We are not trying to belittle publishing nor underestimate translation, much less defend that speech as an individualistic activity that creates no-thing. All speech, on top of being relational and communitarian, also extends to the past, it re-elaborates tradition, and it modifies the speech of our ancestors. A living language must know its dictionaries, to put it briefly, but it cannot be reduced to imitating them. Moreover, a community without translations would soon suffocate. One thing does not cancel the other.

Speech is the marriage between the particular and the universal. We speak *one* language; we say *one* thought; but this language and this thought are previously communicable because *they* participate in the universal (otherwise nobody would be able to understand them): but this universal is not the totality (rather it is *one* universal).

What do the Catalan people have—or what could they have—to say of their own? Certainly not the system of signs from the world of machines. They could learn the language of computer science, and they will possibly have to do so, but, except for perhaps a few isolated individuals, they cannot expect to make a big contribution to it. Ultimately, this semiotic system is not the creation of any people, rather it is a "Sanskrit" of the experts, even if the poets manage to benefit from it afterward. There is good reason for the fact that all airports look the same, and that all control towers have to give instructions in only one language—now it is English. The same can be said of the fact that all megalopolises resemble each other, even if they are not conscious copies of each other. There are not many alternatives to a four-lane highway. Technocracy has its own style, and it cannot have another. Modifications are embellishments, "folklore." Technology, like empires, knows no borders except for the construction of walls, like Maginot, Berlin, customs, and so on. But languages respect limits and human scale. To speak is, precisely, to put a limit on infinity, to embody the ineffable. And every embodiment is made up of meat and bones. To want to Catalanize the world of machines comes down to wanting to Catalanize English. If we all understand the meaning of "no fumar" and "pagesos son infeliços" we will all end up saying these barbaric phrases because they are shorter (more economical) and easier to adapt to an automatic translation.

That which is characteristic of the Catalan people, to put it simply, is linked to their geography. Catalan is not a language of Thailand. The rivers of Palestine are not those of Syria, as the Christian Scriptures already say. But modern geography, like geology, has already become a scientific discipline, where quality is also quantified. This is why if I say that that which is characteristic of the Catalan people is their mountains, their flora, and their fauna, their climate as well as their cities and their towns, I may be misinterpreted and understood in a strictly romantic sense.

And I begin with geography and not with history precisely to avoid romanticism by speaking of Wilfred the Hairy, Ramon Llull, or Monsignor Joanot Martorell. Every highway and every reservoir that is built, the former for the tourists and the latter to be able to consume more energy than that allowed by natural rhythms, is an injury to Catalan autonomy—to its *ontonomy*—unless these "modernizations" develop from the soul of the people and are carried out in their own style. You cannot serve two masters, this has also been written.

The "world" accepts and even finds rational the relocation of the tribes of Papua and New Guinea or of some "reductions" of North American Indians (with compensations by means of paper money, naturally), because their territories contain minerals or oil, or because a highway has to be built, as if space were an empty and uniform box where one puts things, including men.

Language is rooted in space and also in time. Time and language are inseparable. If we abolish the time factor from Cervantes, Goethe, or Dante, we will not only cease to understand what they were saying, we will also misinterpret their beauty. I may find Shakespeare pedantic, Quevedo boring, and Verdaguer coarse. In brief: language, everything that language says and communicates, depends on time.[72]

But the opposite is also true, and for our subject, even more significant: the culture of time, the meaning of life and its connotations, the sensibility, and in one word, the cosmovision also depend on language. If we obstruct a language's change, if we paralyze its evolution, we will not only turn that language into a dead language, we will also kill the culture it represents.

Let us put it a different way: There is no such thing as an immortal language; there is no imperishable semantic form. Languages evolve and transform, but they also die. This would be the force behind the controversy of a Catalan language that does not wish to conserve "essences" just because they are venerable. But the problem does not lie in whether we want or we have to change, not even in preprogramming the direction of change, but rather in the *authenticity of the impulse*.

And this is where we reach a problem that by far exceeds the limits of Catalan, though we apply it to the Catalan regions. I am referring to the current dominant culture in the world, which we could refer to as the technocratic vulture enthroned by the dominion of techno-science, where the economic element is naturally essential. The problem of techno-science is not a technological issue; it is a human problem characterized by the wish, be it active or passive, that a second-rate machine control people's lives. If modern man is not entertained by (all kinds of) machines, he is bored. I imagine that for many city dwellers, a sunset is merely a televised image. But the problem runs deeper than that. German Idealism already saw that "Will is the primordial Being" ("Der Wille ist das Urseyn," as Schelling said)—in this they represented Western temperament. This means that it is believed that reality in general and man in particular want to reach a certain place, walk toward a goal, run toward an omega point. Everything—religion, education, politics, commerce, culture, life—is seen in function of an end, of a temporal *telos*, and therefore, life consists in the conquest, the acquisition, if you please, of this end. Man is interpreted as a pro-ject, launched forward. There is no time for true leisure, for *otium, schole, vacare Deu, o vacare sibi*.[73] We must face the facts: in order to live and survive in this technocratic world we need another language beside traditional Catalan. A change of metaphors is needed, and then one of parables (and of words [*paraules*]). If we wish to enter into technological competitiveness we must do our best to press our language forward, even if this means introducing another alphabet, like the Japanese did. Traditional Catalan is of little use. Let's simplify it, let's not get hung up on adjectives, let's be brief, let's speak in *bits*.[74] I do not believe that Catalan is incapable of making this transformation.[75]

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[72] "When we think about language, the object of our reflection alters in the process. . . . Time and language are intimately related: they move and the arrow is never in the same place," writes George Steiner, op. cit., 18, after having given vivid examples of the need for new and renewed interpretations in order to understand any given text.

[73] We must recall that *vacare* (vacation, vacancy) means "to empty," "emptiness," from where we get "to be free, to be empty, available."

[74] "Damsel, would you be so kind as to sell me a seal for this missive?" The girl, stunned, looks at her younger brother who is also at the counter. "Give him a stamp!" he says.

[75] Cf. the aforementioned article by T. Badia.

But the question, and this is a matter of life and death for the Catalan people—even if we can go on expiring for a few more centuries—consists in knowing if this is our path. We cannot cavort with language and expect impunity.

Either Catalonia joins the growing chorus of multiple voices of very diverse peoples who clamor for an alternative to technocracy, or we must sharpen our hold on the language of computer science. It is not about working eight hours in the competitive world, we need all twenty-four. We cannot separate language from life. But the problem is much deeper than mere coexistence—and symbiosis—between the world of "urbanites" and that of country dwellers, between some bucolic rhapsodists and a swarm of workers.

This is an enormous problem, but I will try to concentrate on the topic at hand. Life and the evolution of languages follow roads that we cannot predict statistically.[76] And even if someday we could do this, we would not be able to apply these statistics to a particular language in a determined situation. Within the micro-sociologic order we can prove that between 1560 and 1600 literary English experienced much greater changes than during the following two centuries; between Herder and Kleist, that is, between 1780 and 1820, German transformed into a different language; the French and Russian Revolutions, on the other hand, were linguistically conservative.[77] A poet alone can either transform a language or stand out like a lone star in the linguistic firmament of his dialect. One fine day, a community can either embark upon a linguistically creative path or sink in its own routine and plagiarisms, because of historic-social-economic-cultural conjunctures, either of some individuals or of a given group.

This is what I was referring to when I spoke of the *authenticity of the impulse*. The impulse is authentic not when it is the result of a syllogism, or fruit of the desire to conquer a certain *télos*, but rather when it emerges spontaneously from within. It may seem paradoxical that the freest things are those not orchestrated by a determined will (which determines them). A community is not created by decree, nor does a language re-blossom or emerge by the desire to create or renovate it. One speaks better not when one wants to speak better, but when one has something better to say. Microelectronics is not going to give us the creative impulse we are missing. In other places I have referred to this as the *new innocence*.

They say that in many African cultures, at least before powdered milk took the place of mother's milk, mothers taught their children to sing before teaching them to speak. Of course, this is said by Western anthropologists; I imagine many of these mothers would protest, saying that there is no word without song and that every word is a song, not only because of its musicality and sonority, but by its very nature. If every sentence is a song, every discourse is the representation of a new music. The score, the grammar, may be well-known, but every time I make a speech it is as if I perform an entire score. There is a difference between the *Song of the Birds* played by Victoria de los Ángeles or by my neighbor, a piece by Bach directed by Harnoncourt or by just anyone, a sermon routinely preached or a homily I give with heart and soul. Every linguistic action is unique, and every speaker is an actor, an artist, a creator, and fidelity to the score or correct grammar does not mean repetition of something that

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[76] Cf. as a curiosity the glottochronology formula to calculate the time (in millennia!) it takes languages of a similar origin to separate from their common roots is:

$$t = \log c$$
$$2 \log r$$

where c = a percentage of words with a common root and r = the percentage of roots maintained after a millennium of separation. Apud Steiner, op. cit., 19.

[77] Data from Steiner, op. cit., 20.

has already been written or said before. In many cultures speech is sacrament: a creation. "Language is a perpetual Orphic song," sings Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*.

You cannot legislate how we have to speak. You can influence the way we speak, and this is where television is much more powerful than the Generalitat. This is the unavoidable political dimension.

Ultimately, life is what forms man's speech. Poets, literati, and men of letters, we have an important role, but it is not decisive. If we show greater interest in machines than in our frame of mind; if we worry more about the economy than about art; if we read more than we speak or we speak for the pleasure of doing it and because we have time; or if we speak merely for business purposes or to gather information, all of this will shape our language and will certainly condition all our metaphors. A poet may open a path, but if it finds no resonance, men will not change their linguistic habits, and if they do not speak spontaneously and creatively, they will never be independent.

A people's independence is their cultural independence, and this is both cause and effect of the independence of their language.

Speech is truly speech when it is creative, when it is true conversation, that is, dialogue, an interchange of experiences, that embraces both the object (the topic) as well as the subject (the speakers). We speak more for expressing ourselves and for being than for communication, more as cultivation of the quintessential human game than in order to transmit information or to teach. Speech's main concern is neither truth nor lies, but rather knowing and making oneself known. Indians lie through their teeth, say Western tourists when they return from the East; they would like for Indians to accommodate to their language: black-and-white and full of "objective truths"; they do not understand that speaking is a game and that there is pleasure in seeing how others participate. In the best of cases, tourists look for information; they do not want to converse, they do not even speak the indigenous languages. And then they accuse the other of being liars.[78] We are still at the height of linguistic colonialism. And there is a danger that Catalan may fall prey to it.

As the ancients said, and Karl Popper reminded us, and Paul Ricoeur, among others, later analyzed, the primary function of language is narrative: to tell stories, to invent myths, to reconfigure the universe we live in and to affirm our intentions. Parodying Talleyrand on the one hand and Wittgenstein on the other, I would say, "Man has been given word in order to *embellish* his thoughts." "La parole a été donnée à l'homme pour déguiser sa pensée," said the former; and "Die Sprache verkleidet die Gedanken," said the latter, playing with words: language conceals, but it also shields thought, like a tight-fitting dress that covers the body at the same time that it reveals it.[79]

The argument is quite simple: if language is merely an instrument, even if it is the instrument of thought, the instrument that will best serve us is that which we will rationally have to accept.

We cannot deny that in the technocracy in which we exist, English is more useful than Catalan. Both because of its utility of use (the vast majority of technological machinery has been planned and executed in English) as well as because of its intrinsic usefulness (English possesses a wealth of technological vocabulary superior to all other languages.)[80]

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[78] Very little has been written on this meaning of lies. Cf. Section 2 Chapter 7 of this volume, and Steiner's fine observations, op. cit., 223ff., with some bibliography.

[79] Tractatus 4.002. Wittgenstein's complete sentence does not have the interpretation I give.

[80] I have been told that in the 1991–1992 term, in the Catalan University "Pompeu Fabra," many classes were given in Spanish, and that advanced science and technology classes were soon given in

But if language is nothing but the body of thinking, which would correspond to the soul, and there is no body without a soul, then language depends on its soul, and vice versa. A people who lose their language lose their soul.

What must we do? Adopt a Puritan and heroic posture that defends Catalan Puritanism? Compromise across the line and allow the laws of the market to also condition language? Set more or less artificial limits by means of regulations and laws? Let us not forget Africa's artificial borders and what European colonialism did there last century: impose rectilinear borders, created with a compass and a ruler (to be read as: guns and money). The consequences are still being, very tragically, paid today. Let us not forget that even at the end of World War I, 85 percent of the Earth's surface belonged to Europe. Possibly 85 percent (the figure is approximate) of current scientific production is written in English (even if only 10 or 15 percent of the human population speaks it fluently).[81] Let us not forget that a substantial part of French and German scientific production is done in English. We are forced to be competitive.[82] But these languages have a power of endurance and a background superior to that which Catalan can offer. My question was: What must we do? Foment a cast of scientists or technocrats who will write a Catalan increasingly influenced by English and leave the "heavy" Catalan for around the house? Foment poetic, or maybe political, elites who more or less artificially cultivate a learned Catalan? Dream of a Catalonia that goes against the tide, and preserves a distinctive way of life and of looking at reality that is not technocratic?

The problems are colossal, but Catalonia cannot ignore its responsibility. I do not answer any of the interrogations posed because the answer cannot be individual; rather they should be collective.

In summary, then, what I have attempted is to avoid what I believe is the modern trap, or more neutrally put, the trap that is characteristic of modernity and is taken to paroxysm by modern science: the method of fragmenting problems and, therefore, reality and, consequently, man. The fragmentation of knowledge leads to the fragmentation of the knower. The problem of language is not a "linguistic" problem, it is a human problem. The problem of Catalan is not a question of grammar; it is the problem of the Catalan people, of their temperament, of their being, of their independence. It is not about a linguistic style, but about a lifestyle. And this is the *kairós*, the opportunity and the challenge of the destiny of this people.

As a provisional conclusion to this address—that is to say, as an introduction to the symposium and, especially, to the problems raised—I will limit myself to a theoretical-practical novena which I will present with nine words, leaving its practical applications for the discussions and for life itself.

Multilingualism

One of the first and most important issues to consider in order to realistically approach the problem of Catalan, like that of any language within this Earth's linguistic concert, is the plural nature of reality in general and of language in particular. If we fall prey to the ideology

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English, as is already done in India, despite their enormous efforts to provide university education in the respective regional languages or in Hindi.

[81] According to the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), English is only the mother tongue of 7 percent of humanity. Yet English is the official, administrative language of approximately 1.4 billion subjects. Consider, for example, India.

[82] An international cardiology congress has just been held in Barcelona. The Olympic Games had four official languages (or three and a half), whereas now, since it is a matter of science, the only official—and officious, judging the programs—language is English. This is the most rational choice.

of competitiveness—linguistic competitiveness, in this case—not only will we come out losing, but so will the "winning" language. It was Yahweh's compassion for saving humanity that overthrew the Tower of Babel.[83]

But the word "multilingualism" is ambiguous, and I would like to use it not to refer to a diversity of state and official languages that struggle over hegemony, but rather in the sense of the living dialects that dialogue among each other. Language is the language of the people and not only the speeches of the state. In fact, multilingualism is universal and natural. It belongs, as we said, to the pluralist nature of reality. What we have too often done with languages is turn them into instruments of power at the service of empires. It has been said that the distinction between language and dialect consists in that the former has a royal academy and an army that protects and propagates it. All living speeches are dialects. The "educated" and the "scientific," for example, speak their own dialect as much as the illiterate or countrymen do. The true situation of languages, when they are not imposed colonially—with a ruler and a compass and from the center of power—is like the rainbow: they go from one color to another without a solution of continuity (despite some opposing linguistic examples due to external, generally military, causes). Go to the Vall de l'Ebre, or to India, or to the Philippines, or to Lower Manhattan in New York. The same thing happens everywhere. It is instinctively that we speak one way to a child, another way to a fellow adult, and yet another to a supervisor—in the same way that we speak differently to an immigrant or to a foreigner, and to men of different social classes. Each people create their own language and their own languages.

Mongolia in the eighteenth century is a classic example: khalka, a Mongolian dialect, was the vernacular, the literary language was classical Mongolian, commerce took place in Chinese, the government's language was Manchu, and the religious language was Tibetan. This structure was accepted by all and structured hierarchically in such a way that there was no phagocytosis of the weakest language by the strongest. This is why we must distinguish between a natural or accepted multilingualism that stems from the particular structure of a society, and a multilingualism born of political or psychological domination. The latter is the case of certain cultural bilingualisms: where there is a domestic language (*bazaar language*) and another used for more serious business. One of my Chicano students in California, who wrote letters to his family in perfect Mexican, who used Mexican as a political weapon in public gatherings in favor of Chicanos, and who even wrote verses in Mexican, did not dare write his doctoral dissertation with me in Mexican because he had never thought "philosophically" in that language.

I have signaled the perils of Catalonian bilingualism in other places: the stronger language will displace the weaker just as the stronger currency displaces the weaker.[84]

As is well known, dominion may be of a determined pronunciation (that of Paris, of Barcelona, of Afro-Americans, etc.).

But I would like to discuss a different sort of multilingualism, a more natural sort, one that has not allowed language to become an instrument of domination.

Multilingualism, in fact, is man's natural state on Earth. Monolingualism has always been in the interest of ideology, ultimately of monotheism. A Sumerian text that predates Genesis and the story of the Tower of Babel tells us—in an imperial tone that is quite contrary to that of Genesis—that all peoples spoke to the God Enlil in one language, and that it was Enki who brought discord among mortals by altering the languages they spoke.

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[83] Cf. "El mito del pluralismo y la torre de Babel," in my *Sobre el diálogo intercultural* (Salamanca: San Esteban, 1990), 15–70, now in Volume VI, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

[84] Cf. *La nova innocència* (Barcelona: Llar del llibre, 1991), 107–10.

But natural multilingualism does not mean numerous official Royal Academies fighting to impose their rules and words. It means a plurality of dialects that allow for harmony between language, activity, and person, as we can still appreciate in many African languages. Language is not imposed from above; it emerges from the relationship between things and people. Even today, every profession owns its own language (for example, the language of science). The plurality of languages is like the many colors of things and the many forms of human activity. Not only did children, men, and women have—and in a certain way still conserve—their own language, but so did different professions, and even more, diverse clans. Only a uniform society without physiognomy (without social classes?) can be monolingual. If we discover the intrinsic link between language and man once again, we will be able to account for the multiplicity of languages on Earth without difficulty.

What does this mean specifically for us? First of all, I think it means we must replace Catalan-Spanish bilingualism with Catalan multilingualism (from Barcelona, from Valencia, from Lleida, etc.). In the second place, we must open ourselves up to the languages of the immigrants, Arabic, English, French. . . . In the third place, the study and praxis of other languages must also be encouraged. And, it goes without saying, we must strengthen Catalan speech. And with this I reach the second point.

Politics

Politics has been defined as the science of the possible, but I would like to add that it is also the art of the impossible or, in more benign terms, of the improbable. This is precisely where the fascination of political activity lies, if we recuperate the noble sense of politics and do not reduce it to Machiavellian attempts to conserve power.

There must be a linguistic policy, but it cannot be separated from the management of public things. What I mean is that linguistic policy must reach from the railstation to a discotheque, from a popular festival to the stock exchange. Language and lifestyle are inseparable. Catalan linguistic policy is tied to general politics in Catalonia. Language is not a specialization. And this is where the power of democracy lies. The people speak their own language.

I have insinuated some of these points in the previous section, and would now like to add another activity.

Catalan, like the majority of existing languages, is a minority language: it represents approximately 0.1 percent of the world population (out of every thousand people, one speaks it). But, as I have just said, even in Europe, minority languages are the majority. An alliance between them would bear more fruits than may at first be expected. Nowadays there is a more or less impotent desire for freedom from dominant culture on all levels, but we cannot see any viable alternatives.[85] *Interculturality* is an imperative of the present time. The first step is the linguistic one. Interculturality is incompatible with monolingualism.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that a plurality of languages is connatural to man.[86]

However, it is not about repeating what is already said in the numerous languages of the European Community in one more language. This would be ridiculous, anti-economic,

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[85] Cf. *Contact Bulletin*, published by the EC Commission, *Bureau européen pour les langues monis répandues*.

[86] The thesis of a recent article full of factual information literally tells us that "the standardization of languages and, in particular, the nation-state's insistence on a shared national language, constitutes a serious threat against the well-being of the inhabitants of many areas, who have more or less involuntarily become citizens of some nation-state" (Thomas H. Eriksen, "Linguistic Hegemony and Minority Resistance," *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 2 [1992]: 313–32). The entire article deserves further study.

and superfluous. Multilingualism does not make sense if it means saying the same thing. The seventeen repetitions that appear in Indian bills for their multiple official languages, for example, bear an exclusively symbolic value. If we are to remain realistic, Brussels cannot work in thirty languages simultaneously. The objective of the network of minority languages is not to put Breton on the same level as French, but rather to help Bretons and Catalans, for example, find alternatives to the dominant system together.

As I have said elsewhere, the people are to the state what the person is to the individual. Individuals are interchangeable, persons are not. Persons are microcosms, individuals are part of a whole. Peoples are historical persons, states are collective individuals. The language of the state is determined for pragmatic reasons; the speech of a community, for vital ones. European multilingualism should not be an obstacle for the European Community, but rather forge a decentralized model of coexistence between peoples. To truly defend Catalan implies coherent policies on all levels—economic, technological, and so on. Otherwise we are being superficial or naïve. We cannot evade these problems.

But now I would like to touch upon some specific issues.

Syntax

Much more than by words, a language is constituted by its syntax, which reveals a specific way of approaching intelligibility. It is a well-known fact that the meaning of a sentence is not found in the sum of the meanings of its elements, and that the order of the words conceals subtle relationships that are only fully grasped by native speakers of the corresponding dialect.[87] The order of subject, verb, and complements, for example, of Indo-European languages, despite occasional flexibilities, implies an entirely different way of thinking alien to many Oriental languages. And within the same Indo-European family, a way of thinking that works by apposition, such as Sanskrit, is very different from one by attribution, such as Greek, or by subordination, such as Latin. How many times have the students of languages had the experience of understanding all of the words of a sentence without grasping its meaning!

Obviously the important thing is not cultivating differences in order to accentuate differential events. The important thing is that these linguistic differences express diverse ways of looking at the world. In Catalan, for example, we can say "plou" without explicitly needing an impersonal subject ("it rains"), but we cannot say "estima," "pensa," as cosmic activities ("it loves," "it thinks"): (the firmament) rains [or more accurately Zeus rains (*Zeis*

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[87] And here is a random example closer to home, and not precisely one of philosophical deliberation, but rather a purely descriptive one. Where an Anglo-Saxon would have written at least five sentences, the German needs only one: "Das im Jahre 1984 auch in deutscher Sprache Umberto Ecos *Nachschrift zum 'Namen der Rose'* herausgekommen ist, bestätigt einen gewissen Interpretationsbedarf des in 1980 in Italien, 1982 in deutscher Übersetzung erschienenen, als Roman bezeichneten Buches des in Bologna lehrenden Semiotikers, das—hier darf man unbeschwert sagen: bekanntlich—trotz des mittelalterlichklösterlich-theologischen Milieus, in dem es spielt, international sensationelle Auflagenhöhen erreicht hat" [The fact that in 1984 Umberto Eco's *Postscript on "The Name of the Rose"* was also published in German confirms a certain need to interpret the work defined as a novel by the semiologist and teacher in Bologna, which was published in Italy in 1980 and translated into German in 1982. Here we may easily say, since it is well known—in spite of its theological and monastic Medieval setting—the number of times the book has been published internationally is truly sensational] (H. R. Schlette, op. cit., 360), which happens to be the first sentence of the article. Information here is not transmitted as such, but rather interspersed in order to create an atmosphere that stimulates and justifies further reading, for those who think in German, naturally.

óei—later *úei*)]; (the Earth) loves; (heaven) thinks.[88] We cannot do without an *ego*, a proprietary personal subject for these actions.

However, syntax does not only mean grammatical order. It means order in speech, order in thought, and order in life. We sometimes lack confidence in ourselves. I am not defending grammatical anarchy and even less a lack of respect for tradition or rules; nor the following of trends or whimsies. But I do believe that fear inhibits creativity and that many times lack of self-confidence comes from not having cultivated enough of what we should have. It is not a secret to say that we lack cultural density.

Could it not be, as I sometimes suspect, that this low cultural level comes from the subtle imposition of a foreign syntax? There are almost no agoras left, nor houses of the word, nor conversational groups ("*tertulias*": which has such an appealing etymology).[89] Linguistic atrophies lead to atrophies in thinking.

It is not necessary to point out that we refer to syntax in its traditional sense, which does not contradict the sense it is given by logical positivisms and transformational, generative, or functional grammars (Harris, Chomsky, Martinet, etc.) nor logical syntax (Carnap) nor merely formal syntax (Husserl, maybe also Gödel, etc.), though it does not coincide with them either. These studies are very interesting, but they are merely semiotic and not semantics, they treat language as a system of signs, turning its meanings into abstractions.

But our problem refers to the specificity of Catalan, not as it integrates in a more general formal system. Without going into the general question of whether man's problems may be treated as algebraic problems, what interests us is precisely that element that is irreducible to general laws.

Thus, I am referring to that which we could call the intelligible sensibility that emerges from Catalan syntax.[90] Linguistic families share many common traits; others are more particular. What does double negation mean, for instance? What lies behind the use of prepositions? In a word: syntax as revealer of a *forma mentis*.

Rhythm

I am inclined to think that rhythm is that which is characteristic of each language. Rhythm is more than syntax.

Rhythm is what inspires the order of words and puts adjectives and verbs one place or another. Rhythm is what dictates if it is necessary to use one word or another. Rhythm is what originates contractions, *sandhi*, repetitions, and the cadence of the sentence. Rhythm is what determines short or long vocals in a word or a sentence, and puts the commas, periods, and commas or periods.

When we say, "You can't say this like this in English," even if the sentence is grammatically correct, what we mean to say is not only that a native speaker would not say it that way (nowadays it is not the native speakers who set the trend in English: Rushdie, Naipaul,

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[88] Cf. the magnificent chapter of the much too rapidly forgotten Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, "'Es regnet' order die Sprache steht auf dem Kopf," in the first volume of his book, op. cit., 35–85.

[89] Be it from the cenacles, inside or outside the theaters, that imitated the writer and Christian erudite Tertullian, or by the corruption of St. Augustine's expression "philosophaster tullius" into "philosophus Tertullius" or "Ter Tullius" (three times more judicious than Cicero), as Lluís Vives discovered and we are reminded in the *Diccionari de Coromines*.

[90] Not in vain one of the greatest poets in Catalan language—the then-young Joan Maragall—wrote, "la sensibilitat em fa de religió." These are the depths where speech comes from (*apud* Jordi Maragall i Noble, *Fe i cultura en Joan Maragall*, Quaderns Fundació Maragall, no. 17 [Barcelona: Claret, 1993], 5).

Joyce, Aurobindo, no matter how old-fashioned the latter may seem), but rather that the sentence does not correspond to the rhythm of the language. And this rhythm is formed by the pronunciation of the words, as well as by habit and other more subterranean forces. Rhythm is style. And style is the *morphe*, the form of a language. If its *animus* is the speaker, rhythm is its *anima*.

This is the reason why literal translations offend the sensibility of the language that is translated into. This is also the reason why, to a certain extent, it is more difficult to translate prose than poetry well. The latter demands that its original rhythm be respected. The fact that it is translated poetry is understood. But prose requires that the translation conceal its true status, that it not appear to have been translated at all.

French syllables, to give another example, are usually the same, whereas English ones tend to be different in duration and force. But rhythm is not only a matter of phonetics or of versification, for example, as in alexandrines. Rhythm is also a matter of thought and of repetition. The distichs of Hebrew psalms give us an example; the rhythm of adjectives in Romance languages, unlike English, another. What makes one style cumbersome in one language is what sometimes simplifies in another.

However, as I have said elsewhere, rhythm is not found in words alone, or in isolated thoughts. Rhythm lies in the relationship between thing and speaker. This is why rhythm is not the result of a will, but rather the fruit of a full dynamism, the interaction between subject and object, between the four constituent elements of the word. And I return to my own *ritornello*: we cannot separate speech from speaker, or the latter from his way of life or from the spatiotemporal situation of the historical moment.

There is, evidently, a strong relationship between rhythm and poetry. Deep down, all speech, when it is creative, should be considered poetry. This does not mean it is in verse or in so-called artistic cadences in any restrictive sense.

This leads us to the content of beauty each language owns. To speak means to speak well, and to speak well means speaking beautifully. And this is only possible if our soul is beautiful, Plato would say. The rhythm of speech greatly depends upon the rhythm of thought, and this, upon the rhythm of life. If we have no time to think, we will have no time to speak either. We will not be able to have a beautiful and good Catalan if the rhythm of our life is vertiginous and apace.

Perhaps another way to say the same thing is what Carles Riba called taste. Taste is not inherited, but "a set of criteria that best ensures each individual's education is transmissible."[91]

Play

Language also has a recreational function. Playing does not only mean using toys; it does not only mean having fun (to amuse oneself, to pass the time, or do something useless). Playing is cultivating one of man's dimensions that relates to *ingenium* more than to reason.[92] Speech is a game; perhaps the human game par excellence. *Homo ludens.*

I am obviously referring to games with language. Perhaps one of the best examples of this comes from Persian culture: their public performances with an entertainer who would

[91] Preface to the second edition (1954) of the Diccionari "Pompeu Fabra."

[92] Cf. for *ingenium*—so important until the seventeenth century—the book by Ernesto Grassi, *Einführung in die philosophische Probleme des Humanismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), and let us also recall the work of Baltasar Gracián, *Arte de ingenio* (Madrid, 1642), republished as *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* (Huesca, 1648), which was highly influential in France and Germany. Schopenhauer translated one of his works and avowed to have read them all.

begin or improvise a distich that the audience would consequently complete. This was also tradition in the Basque country, and it is practiced in Urdu-speaking India. We can also think of so many other games, such as theater—also cinema—and, especially, life.

I now refer fundamentally to speech as play, to the recreational character of language, to the liturgy of the word. The word is a liturgy, that is, a "work of the people," a creation of the community, a creation that can only be carried out by listening to inner words, divine words, the voice of the ancients, the echoes of tradition, the word of God . . . whichever you prefer, but nothing stops it from being a game, that is, the quintessential human activity. It is the *negotium*, the *skholè* of the ancients. Speech leads to enthusiasm, to being inspired by divinity, to being full of God (cf. *enthousiázō, én theós*, and naturally Plato).

To speak is not essentially to inform, we've already said this; to speak is the quintessential human activity. And this activity is certainly work, praxis, but it is also play and joy. Words like "diversion" or "entertainment," which we use to express this, betray the loss of this meaning. The joy of speaking is much more than having fun or entertaining oneself; it is to live, to enjoy life, to cultivate ingenuity (which has practically disappeared nowadays, as has the actual word); furthermore, it is generally used to mean something else); it is the actual *cultura animi*, to borrow the Ciceronian definition of philosophy. The inhabitants of the Languedoc do not have to be reminded of what the floral games are—or what they could still be.

Dialectal Flexibility

Modern linguists distinguish between *Pidgin, Sabir, Creole,* and *dialect*. The first two are degenerations or ultra-simplifications of a dominant and basic language that a group, who generally speaks another language, uses to satisfy primary immediate needs (Pidgin-English of Cameroon; Sabir, the lingua franca of the port of Marseilles). Creole, on the other hand, is spoken in homes and transmitted from parents to children (French-Creole of Haiti). Sufficiently developed it can grow to become a dialect, which is the consistent and complete language spoken by a more or less considerable historical group.

I have already repeatedly mentioned that living languages are always dialectal and, therefore, fluid, changing, and free. This in no way means that every local form of a language has the right to become a citizenship with a common language. Writers in every region must "elevate" the word in question to the "category of literary word."[93] This does not suggest that regulations and dictionaries are the dictators of a language.

What I wish to emphasize is the *intrinsically* liberating function of language. He who speaks must do it freely not only in what he says, in saying what he thinks, but also in the way of saying it; in saying it as it comes from within. He who does not feel the act of speech, as such, is an act of freedom—not because of what he says, but because of the act itself—he who does not experience the freedom of language not only will not be a creator but will be a very dull inhabitant of this planet. I am often asked why the poor and vulnerable populations of so many African and Asian countries seem to be much happier than those from the sarcastically named first world. And without wanting to develop this argument fully right now, more than once I have had to answer that it is because they live and rejoice in the joy of speech and of creative and humanizing speaking. Poverty is not what makes them happy (even if overabundance is what makes us unhappy). We also know of equally poor peoples who live under dictatorships and who are not happy, precisely because they do not have freedom of

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[93] Pompeu Fabra in the Preface of the first edition of his *Diccionari General de la Llengua Catalana* (Barcelona: Llibreria Catalònia, 1932).

speech (which is not only measured by the content, but also by the continent). We all know the cathartic and political function of humor in totalitarian regimes.

However, we should also apply this in our own home. We find ourselves in an anomalous situation, one of which we should take advantage. Because of political factors that go beyond the times of General Franco and Primo de Rivera, Catalan has been pursued, discredited, and on occasions suppressed. We now find ourselves in a hiatus that we would like to fill academically in order to move forward. On the other hand, the people do not know how to speak an inexistent Catalan. And, inadvertently, we are contaminated by the predominant ideology. The same thing happens in the ideology of development: we want to help others and save the bodies of the poor countries in the same way we wanted to save their souls before. The very idea of development is monocultural and colonialist, no matter how much we wish to sweeten it.[94]

There is also a latent colonialism in the zeal to unify Catalan, even if the official reason is its purification. This does not go against the idea of setting general norms, but it is directed against the unification of Catalan, as I have already said. The example of Nebrija in the Iberian Peninsula, wanting to unify the languages of Castilla in order to unify the empire of the Catholic Kings, is well known. We should not want to do the same now, even if it is with the best intentions imaginable.

In one word: there is no democracy without *logocracy* (or *linguisticocracy*, if it weren't such an ugly word). The people cannot have power (democracy) if they do not have not only knowledge of their own language but also power over it. We must show a vote of confidence toward speaking peoples, even if this means we have to be able to respond to their desires and their questions. Gandhi told Christian missionaries that they should be able to attract followers because of the perfume of their lives and not because of the aggressiveness of their institutions. Let us learn this lesson.

Semantic Alliance

The world's circumstances are very different now than when Catalan was more alive. Nevertheless, Catalan has survived and it has more than proven its vitality and force. But if we are to avoid being anachronic, we must not fall victim to the latest trends. The best diving board to leap into the future is to be firmly rooted in the past, more than in the present, and not be afraid to jump.

I remember only one specific thing from a conference by Pompeu Fabra. He said something along the lines of: Do not ask me how you say something in Catalan or how you should say it, because I don't know, and we don't know. Ever since then, the idea that the people must decide how to say something by applying their own creativity has stuck with me. When I say "the people" I am not thinking of the newcomer who wants to reintroduce original terms, sounds, or expressions, on a whim and without any foundation. Carles Riba said that "a style is not alive because of lexical proliferations or impure anarchic idioms."[95]

This is the reason why the previous point must be combined with the one we now discuss. I do not want to exaggerate and affirm that the truth of words lies in their etymology, even if *étymon* does mean "truth"; but I would like to preserve the memory of words and not lose sight of the wealth accumulated in their etymology. The latest use of a word in the latest television show does not make it normative. It is not fair to explain, for example, that *dharma*

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[94] I recommend Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *The Development Dictionary* (London: Zed, 1992), for the definite abandonment of this idol.

[95] Op. cit., xix.

is "that which sustains the world," because the root *dhr* means to sustain, maintain, and, on the other hand, to say that *religion* is a mere institution of priests looking to preserve a power they are losing, forgetting the Latin *re-ligare* or *re-eligere* or *re-legere*, as if our country were the only one with castes.

I repeat: this is neither about romanticisms nor conservationisms, but rather about continuing the vitality of a language that is millenary in its current form and trimillenary in its known origins, which are still alive. Perhaps I have spent too many years translating from the Vedic, but if we lose vital contact with the roots of words, the wind of technocracy is going to blow us away and we will lose all identity. I am not saying that he who defends the values of the economic *market* (*mercat*) must know that a *marketer* (*mercader*) does not necessarily have to be a *mercenary* (*mercenary*) nor the latter a *Mercedarian* (*mercedari*), because the *merchandise* (*mercaderies*) is no longer found in *mercer shops* (*merceries*), since these are no longer *mercies* (*mercès*), but rather *commerce* (*comerç*) that has been bought thanks to the intervention of the god *Mercury*, and probably because he is worthy of *merit* (*merescut*) by reason of his *mercy* (*mercè*). But I do affirm that all these senses and nonsenses should not be completely absent from our linguistic commerce. Language is the oldest and most important historical and cultural document that man possesses.

Linguistic Polyphony

I have said before that word means sound as much as meaning, and that it implies a relationship between at least two human beings. In other words, speech means music and what today is referred to as human relations. Since we have already mentioned the need for dialogue, I will insist on the first point here.

Language is also music, and the word has a musical reality as well. To speak is to sing, and to sing is also to speak. This implies that the cultivation of language cannot be separated from the cultivation of music. Just as we mistakenly confuse the word with its meaning, as if there were only Platonic essences, thus we also fail to differentiate music from orchestra concerts.

We will not learn how to speak our language, nor will we speak it well, if we do not learn how to sing it (and how to sing our songs); nor will we *know* how to sing if we do not know how to talk. The ancients knew this because music was part of the *quadrivium*[96] and an essential complement to the *trivium*, before the latter became "trivial." The great task at hand nowadays consists precisely in the de-trivializing grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic.

We want to say that the music of a people and their language are inseparable. If modern music is not Catalan, if all the popular songs are in English, no matter how hard linguists try, Catalan will not soar. It is all related.

Mythology

I leave this point for last and as closure to everything I have wanted to say because I believe it to be of capital importance. We have spoken about the word, and we have said that the word is *logos*. But we must complement all this by insisting that it is also *mythos*.

Our age has overcome the pejorative meaning that a portion of Greek thought gave to the word "myth" as little less than a synonym for "lie," or at least this is how some interpret it. Needless to say, mythology is also not what the "science of myths," with its characteristic pride in rationalism, expected it to mean (a rational explanation of that which the "primitives" did not know how to express), but rather, the *mythos legein*, the actual story of myth.

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[96] Arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy.

Narrative does not demonstrate (*demostra*), it shows (*mostra*). Myth stops being myth if it is not believed.[97]

Speech, we said, is not essentially either to inform nor to communicate, nor to give the reason for things (once we have found the reason, what then?). Speech is the actual manifestation, it is the very same life of the speaking being, it is how man is fulfilled. This speech is fundamentally narrative. But narrative does not mean "telling stories"; it is more like participating in the creative narration of the universe, as we insinuated at the beginning. The mythical word is operative. This is why myth and cult, myth and ritual are so intimately tied.

One of Democritus's more difficult texts, which is also one of the hardest to translate, says that "God mythologizes": *panta Zeus mytheetai*,[98] "Zeus mythifies everything," which possibly means that Zeus speaks everything, says everything to himself. This *mythos* is companion to the living word, to the *logos* that characterizes man.[99] *Mythos* and *logos* go together.

This leads us to the actual meaning of human life. The mythical word is the spontaneous speech that we utter because we believe, we believe in that which we say; it takes us beyond the provable. It is the word that creates because it participates in the actual breath of the Spirit. A people learn how to speak when they truly believe something.[100]

Words and Terms

> *Anādinidhanam brahma Śabdatattvam yad akṣaram!*
> *vivartate 'rthabhāvena prakriyā yagato yataḥ*
> Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya* I.1*

A truly philosophical homage cannot be without words. But words are more than mere terms. I would like to offer authentic words of appreciation to my friend and colleague K. S. Murty, with this meditation on words that is being nurtured by the wisdom of the East and the West.

There are three realms of reality: these realms are already irreducibly expressed in language and clearly manifested in the so-called personal pronouns. I should immediately add that "pro-noun" does not necessarily signify "instead" of the noun, a substitute. It may also mean "before," namely, more important than the noun. A pronoun is a truly primordial word. The Sanskrit grammarians called it *sarvanāman*, that is, "a name for everything, for all" (the fullness of a name). This is, I would maintain, the ultimate *upaniṣad* of the *Upaniṣads*: the teaching of I, Thou, and It as the basic pillars of the real. This is the *upaniṣad* of the *mahāvākyas*:

[97] Cf. my study "Mythos und Logos. Mythologische und rationale Weltsichten," in *Geist und Natur*, ed. H. P. Dürr and W. Ch. Zimmerli (Bern: Scherz, 1989), 206–20. Now in Volume IX, Part 1 of this *Opera Omnia*.

[98] Fragm. 30. Diels-Kranz put a question mark after the last word and very suggestively translates, "Alles beredet Zeus mit sich." The classical Gredos translation equally says, "Todo lo delibera Zeus en sí mismo" [all is deliberated by Zeus in himself] (III.346 text 80).

[99] This text begins by referring to the men of *logos*, that is, the men that think and speak: *ton logion anthropon* "among the men of logos" [those who think and speak] . . . "among reasonable men," say the Clàssics Gredos, and "Von den denkenden Menschen" (Diels-Kranz).

[100] The bibliography on language is incommensurable, as can be seen in the following selection: *Bibliographie de la philosophie* (Paris: Vrin, 1937–2010); *International Philosophical Bibliography* (Louvain–la Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1991).

* This Brahman is beginningless and endless; the real word, imperishable, which manifests itself through beings and from Which the world comes.

aham brahmāsmi, tat tvam asi, ayam ātmā brahma and *prajñānam brahma.* These three forms, the *I*, the *Thou*, and the *It* (including the respective duals and plurals), are mutually irreducible, as language still unmistakably tells us. The I "is" not, nor "art," but (the) I "am." The thou "is" not, nor "am," but (the) thou "art." The it "am" not, nor "art," but (the) it "is." Now this simple reflection which Ferdinand Ebner already pointed out over half a century ago is pregnant with the most far-reaching consequences.

   The imperial dominion of modern science over almost all forms of knowledge, including the so-called sciences of the spirit, has habituated "educated" Man to the practically exclusive use of and interest in the "is." Science has depersonalized everything. It has reduced everything to the impersonal mood of the "it is," the so-called third person by undue extrapolation. Properly speaking, as should be evident for those conversant with the Indo-European roots of the human experience, the personal pronouns are only two: the first and the second persons: the *aham* and the *tvam* in Sanskrit. Significantly enough, they are not split into genders: they embrace the totality of Man's range—masculine and feminine, both or none. Sometimes they even stand for the singular and plural at the same time, as in Sanskrit (especially in Vedic). The so-called third person is borrowed from the demonstrative pronoun: we monstrate, signal, and even demonstrate; at best we speak *about* the "third person" (generally in the absence), but never to it (except in metonymic idioms). No wonder that having reified it we begin to distinguish the *he* from the *she* and from the *it*. In Sanskrit "that" is: *sas* (*saḥ*), *sā, tad* (*tat*): a he-that, she-that, or it-that (with corresponding duals and plurals). The real person is not quantifiable and presents the threefold modality revealed in speech: I am speaking with you and you with me about something (somebody).[101] But back to the "is."

   Now, measurability is the first and most universal character of the "is," that is, its propensity for being reduced to quantitative parameters. This is what is called experimentation, that is, the application of mathematics to other fields of the real. This is a most distinctive feature of the modern scientific period of the Western world.[102]

   Science is the domain of the "is." The "is" is the object. An object "is" this or that. Any statement in the "third person" contains objective affirmations of a certain state of affairs. Even when the sciences deal with you or me, they deal with "us" in an objective, dispassionate, "scientific" way, having previously reduced "me" and "you" to objects of the corresponding observations or measurements.

   There would be no science if there were not the possibility of expressing what is the case in objective statements. The characteristic quality of such a statement is that it is valid in itself. It "says" something in itself, that is, independently of me and you and the saying. Science needs "scripture," followed by the printing press and soon the computer. Science is not the saying but the said. S *is* P. This is the (magic) scientific formula par excellence. Even when

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   [101] It is interesting to note that in Vedic Sanskrit the dual often implies the pair of the genders: "fathers" in dual means (parents) father and mother, but also the dual "mothers" means mother and father, just as "days" (dual) means day and night or "heavens" (dual), heaven and earth. If we translate from the "it" to the personal (first and second) pronouns, what seems odd becomes obvious: "both mothers" meaning "father and mother" is odd, but "both of you" speaking to a mother or a father ("you two") yields immediately the meaning "parents."

   [102] Are we not still reading in anatomy and history books about the outrageous and incomprehensible obscurantism of the European Middle Ages forbidding the use of human corpses for scientific experiments? We would feel it repugnant to taste them, but to analyze them is the scientific sacred duty, for the benefit of humankind, of course. Cf. the contemporary desire to experiment with human subjects, only tempered by extrinsic moral reasons! *You* (including your body) may be sacred, but a body simply "is" an object of science.

we say, "This are you," we mean, "This *is* you," if the statement is to have any scientific value. It means, "This *is* your picture—the picture of *what* you are." Any statement not reducible to S *is* P is not scientific and for science not intelligible. Science can be codified, expressed in statements—which in principle anybody can read. Is modern man not also amazed, not to say scandalized, at all the *disciplinae arcani*, secret doctrines and esoteric teachings of ancient times, unscientific fads? Does not the modern spirit consider it undemocratic and even unjust to forbid people to write down the Vedas, to translate the Bible or the Qur'an, to make pictures of God or even to utter his Name? These attitudes assume that the world of the I and the Thou cannot be rendered into statements of the It. Certainly all this is the opposite of the scientific outlook and incompatible with it. Science assumes that the real and the truth can be at least translated into statements and that the statements have objective and thus verifiable value. From the scientific point of view all those other attitudes of mere personal communication are incomprehensible. The scientific statement properly is the written statement. One wonders at Socrates, Buddha, and Jesus, who did not write a single line, or at Muhammad who simply transmitted what he received. They certainly were not scientists.

Ultimately science does not need words. It requires only signs. With mathematical or algebraic digits this is patent. It is less obvious when science uses common names as signs. They should properly be called terms. Science uses terms and not, strictly speaking, words. It terms the phenomena it deals with. A science is a set of terms that allows a system of coherent relations among them. One of the most difficult scientific tasks is precisely to find the proper terms that would express a proper question within an encompassing set of terms.

Yet in spite of the high degree of abstraction and sophistication of many sciences, their terms still often well from the common reservoir of current names and are used as particular signs. This gives sciences the appearance of speaking words when in reality they are only using terms. This is what causes the ambivalence of scientific language: it uses "ordinary language" and thus common names as signs, without realizing that those names are also words. With technical names there is no possible doubt or ambiguity. H_2SO_4 is a sign for sulfuric acid, and it *is* just a question of knowing the meaning of the formula, which will already give us most of the properties of that chemical substance. Terms are very rich in information. Any student of chemistry just by knowing the "meaning," by which he refers to the coded information enshrined in the formula, will be able to tell us that H_2SO_4 is an acid, a saturated one, made of the oxygenation of sulfur, with two ions responsible for its acidity, with a maximum stability, and so forth. The formula will also tell us the composition of the chemical substance, how it functions, how it can be oxygenated, and so on. But the very formula is also "read" or rather "pronounced" as "sulfuric acid" (and not just written H_2SO_4), and "acid" has not only the scientific "meaning" of a proton donor or a yielder of ions under certain conditions; it means also a quality that we detect with our taste (something sour) or with our intellect (as something sharp, biting, and the like). Where is the root metaphor?

The impact of the scientific outlook is so powerful in the modern, especially the Western, world that there is a shift in the *primum analogatum* of the metaphor, so much so that the so-called educated person generally handles and uses terms and no longer speaks words. All too often education amounts to supplanting words with terms. This has a devastating effect. Technological society uses names as signs, as references scientifically defined, as more or less univocal ciphers pointing toward states of affairs scientifically organized and ordered.

"Moon" is a name that stands as the sign for a Newtonian or at most Einsteinian material body (satellite) that rotates with a uniform and known speed around the planet Earth at a definite distance; "Philippines" is the name for six thousand islands geographically exactly situated and historically determined, with a definite population, a more or less complicated

economy, and perhaps with a peculiar psychology among its inhabitants: both of these are signs referring to scientific facts, either already known or sufficiently delineated as reasonable scientific hypotheses.

"Time" is no longer what people throughout human history have understood by that name, but simply the mathematical relation between distance (called again equivocally "space") and speed. "Force" has little to do with power, but is simply the product of "mass" by "acceleration." "Energy," "light," "matter," "water," "air," and so on, are no longer more or less mysterious beings with possible life of their own and freedom, but scientific parameters whose "nature" (i.e., birth and origin) is not important, but whose behavior we can "know," that is, predict.

This shift from words to terms has permitted Man to gain a precise outlook in the words of objectivity, and it is a positive and extraordinary gain. The negative aspect arises when Man falls into the psycho-sociological temptation of considering the objective world, the only important and ultimately real world, and/or the philosophical temptation of assuming that objectivity is the only precise and knowable reality, ultimately the only reality: scientific outlook overshadows then human insight.

We all know that nominalism (*sophismata britanniea*, said the Renaissance) is the basic assumption of science. Now, the scientific use of terms implies that we have abolished the "whims of fantasy" and found the exact correlation between terms and concepts. Ideally each term represents a concept; and we use concepts as mental signs referring to realities beyond them. The world of terms becomes the outer expression of the world of concepts. This is the essence of nominalism: names do not name things but merely represent concepts. Science deals with concepts, and methodology is the proper technique to extract adequate concepts from reality, just as a chemical or physical method is a technique to extract an element from a compound or an ore from the Earth. Clarity, distinction, and precision are the ideals—and conditions—for scientific intelligibility. Everything should be reduced to univocity; otherwise what kind of validity and certainty could our statements have? Or, as one constantly hears, "Otherwise we do not know what we are talking about." This is extremely useful. Terms are determined, they are terminal; they delimit the boundaries of a concept; they are suitable to definitions, disposed to being defined, delimited, as the very etymology of the name suggests. This makes possible the fulfillment of one of the great pretensions of science: universality. In fact, the scientific language, we are told again and again, is universal. By this is meant that any scientific statement can be translated, provided we have another set of names corresponding to the original ones. Terms can easily be substituted for others *signifying* the same "thing." This is precisely scientific translation: merely an organic and systematic exchange of labels without modification of the *things*. We have another set of terms as a medium of expression, as an instrument for signaling the objective reality "behind" or "beyond," or simply the internally coherent play of the figures themselves. We exchange labels as we exchange goods or, ultimately, money. One of the most important branches of the so-called pure sciences is dealing precisely with the conditions and possibilities of translation, called structures, transformations, and typologies.

In all rigor one should not speak of scientific universality, but of universal translatability, given certain conditions. $2 + 2 = 4$ here and everywhere, now and forever, on the condition that they remain purely formal without *meaning* anything beyond and behind $2 + 2 = 4$. $2 + 2 = 4$ only says that a formal number 4 results from the addition of a pair of other formalities. To say that it means "two girls plus two boys equal four human beings" implies a series of qualitative jumps not warranted by the formula. If we apply $2 + 2 = 4$ to Yājñavalkya and Balmes plus Laotze and Spinoza, there is really no "4" of anything applicable

to our "philosophers." We can mention four personalities or at least four bodies, but all the terms fulfilling the "4" are mere concepts of our mind. Not even the atoms and molecules constituting their bodies are the same, that is, homogeneous enough to be "4" of anything real. In simpler words: the 4 is not an existent; it does not refer to any existence. We can find rules for the most sophisticated correlations, but we cannot translate hearts or minds, still less persons: they are not universalizable. An axiom of the old Scholastics was *de singularibus no est scientia*, they (the singular persons) have no point of reference, and thus cannot be conceptually (rationally?) known.

Real things are not sufficiently represented by scientific terms. We can repeat a term each time we need to put the same label on the same "thing" just as we write the same formula on each new bottle of sulfuric acid that comes into the lab. Science is the art of proper terming and we term always in the "third person," in the objectified form: this "is" a stone, this "is" calcium bicarbonate, this "is" a tiger, this "is" Germany; it "is" proper or even it "is" true; this "is" Peter, or that "is" God. In a single sentence: *this is* (or *that is*). We apply the basic formula S *is* P. We use terms and by so doing we classify, objectify, and introduce order and a system of reference. Scientific language is a system of signs, an organic set of signs of information and thus a valid means of communicating objective data. We react to them and act accordingly. Science is information.

In this sense we even refer to the "language" of animals. They react to a set of signs once they learn the correlation between the sign and the things; they know the significance of signs. They may be less developed than human beings, but certainly animals have their "language" and use signs. "Language" here is an intermediary, *the* intermediary between a subject and an object; it is the most important tool of living beings. Modern analysis of language, structuralism, and logical positivism have shown us the extent of sophistication that can be reached in a language.

In short: terms are the visible and usually audible expressions of concepts, and a concept is a *medium quo*, a means by and through which we signify the real thing.

But this is not all, and I dare say not by far the most important aspect of language, of Man and of Reality. To reduce language to a means, Man to an information system, and Reality to a global net of communications is an impoverishment of language, Man, and Reality. Moreover, it amounts to artificially crippling language, Man, and Reality, falling prey to the reductionism referred to at the beginning. It amounts to reducing the entire field of Reality to the *it* and the *is*, forgetting—if not despising—the *are* and the *am*, the you (thou) and the I. Not only is the world of subjectivity left out, but the sphere of the person, the realm of human life is ignored. Let me explain concentrating exclusively on one particular aspect of this enormous problem: that of language.

We use terms, but we speak words. A word is not a mere term. The word is not a simple sign.

Terms are not flexible; they are exact, precise. You cannot call a substance sulfurous if it is sulfuric. Terms are objective once they have been fixed and determined. Not so with words. And yet these are not merely subjective. They present a very peculiar character. On the one hand, the word is given, we share in the word; it is by no means our invention. We have to say the right word and this is not left to our whim. On the other hand, each authentic word is our creative discovery—is, as it were, new for the first time. We give it a meaning, a slant, a connotation: that is what makes that word a real one and not the repetition of a stereotyped model. If I say "justice" or "democracy" or "love," I am giving life to those words, and they mean something that is also my creation. Even if it is the mere discovery that a given state of affairs is expressed in a certain word(s), that discovery modifies me, it creates something in me that was not there. In short, the relation between the word and the speaker is not a

mere dialectical relation. It is a peculiar relation proper to language. Well known in this connection is W. von Humboldt's saying that in order to understand a single word, already we need the totality of language.

The direct consequence of nominalism, although it has taken some centuries to become patent, is the unbridgeable gulf it has created between things and the "thinking" about them. The moment that names become terms—that is, the moment that names no longer *say* things or express the real, but only concepts—there is an insurmountable chasm between things on the one side and concepts on the other. We create the entire world of concepts, we handle a coherent system of terms; and as long as we keep the naive uncritical belief that reality is a docile servant of the constructs of our mind, it works without further problem. But the moment that either of the things cease to be so ductile or that we ask ourselves for the foundation of such belief, the rift between subjectivity and objectivity becomes unhealable.

But neither is thinking mere reasoning, that is, calculating and counting [the root *ra* (*re*) of *ratio* means to reckon], nor is the word pure sign. *The word is symbol.*

A real word includes the speaker as much as the spoken with, the spoken of, and the spoken to. A word is not an isolated entity. A word is only word if it is spoken by somebody (the speaker); if it has a sound, a sensuous countenance (the spoken with); a meaning, a sense (the spoken of); and a receiver, a hearer (the spoken to) to whom and for whom we speak and who in a way draws our own words out with their presence, influence, expectations, range of perceptivity, interests, and the like. The receiver conditions our word as much as the subject matter—a fact that no Oriental is likely to forget, language being communication (and ultimately communion) among persons as much as communication of (or at least information about) an objective state of affairs.

The sound of a word is its sound, but it is not the whole word. The meaning of a word is its meaning, but it is not the whole word. The speaker of the word is the speaker, but there is more in the word than the speaker, although the distinction should not mislead us to separation.[103] The receiver of the word is the spoken to and also not the entire word, but there is no real word if it is not spoken to someone, either physically in front of the speaker or internally before the inner word. There is no word without these four elements, all in an indestructible unity; the speaker uttering the word, its physical sound, its contents (intended and inherent meaning), and its hearer. Each of these elements is constitutive of the word. Further, none of them can be isolated from the respective worlds (of speaking beings, sounds, contents [intentions/meanings] and listening-understanding beings).

Modern man is so imbued with the scientific mentality that even when willing to agree with the above analysis he finds it difficult to accept the underlying assumption: the ontological priority of language. There is something more fundamental than the four elements of language, namely language itself. The word is not a link between these four elements, as if they had a consistency of their own, but just the contrary: the four elements are constitutive parts of a whole that is the word. It is only the nominalist interpretation of the word that assumes that language is simply a set of signs merely indicating external relations among independent entities. No wonder that once the elements are cut asunder there is no way to put them together again.

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[103] Modern technological generations, due to the proliferation of "speaking machines," no longer naturally connect the spoken word with a human speaker, so that the "human" voice does not appear directly tied to a human being. The psychological effects and their impact on education, crime, etc., are worth studying. But no amount of technology can delete the *logos* from *techne* and disfigure completely its human face. I have coined the word *techniculture* to express the passage from agricultural to *techni-cultural* civilization—in spite of its dangers and ambivalences.

A word does not stand for something else; it does not point to something totally independent of and separable from the word. This should be taken quite literally or, rather, verbatim. If we did not have the word "justice," we could have no justice. We might have equity, democracy, and fair distribution of goods or punishments—we might have *dharma* or *ordo*, and so on—but we would not have justice. This appears to be a tautology, and in a certain sense it is a *qualified tautology* as are all ultimate utterances, as they have no ground beyond them, and language is ultimate. A word is the very manifestation, simultaneously revealing and concealing, exposing and protecting what it says, as a garment hides and manifests our own body or as our bodies reveal and conceal our own selves. We may draw mental distinctions among the four constituents of the word, but separation would be mortal. The word is the revelation of what it says, and the word is in the saying—it is the very appearance, the epiphany of what it says from the speaker to the spoken to. A word is a word when it *says* (something to us), that is, when we understand it. And we understand a word when we stand under its spell and the word manifests (puts in our hand), puts at our disposal what it says. A word is word when it speaks.

The word is material and spiritual, sensual and intellectual, personal and impersonal, all in one. It has power and meaning. But the word is not a mere bridge under which the foreign waters of intellectual meaning flow independently, not a mere channel through which the freshet of a lofty spirit irrigates the dry land of ignorant listeners. The word is like an arch that would not only unite but also make, by distinguishing them, the two shores it bridges. The shores are different shores, and neither an undistinguishable monistic ocean nor two unrelated, dualistic, infinitely distant rivers, precisely because the arch is there. The pillars of the arch are grounded in the shores, and in our metaphor they are the shores that belong to the arch as much as the arc proper is part of the total arch.

Now these two pillars that belong to the word are not the epistemological subject and object, but the I and the Thou. Not only is there no I without a Thou and vice versa, for the I is only such if there is a Thou, and conversely; but there is neither I nor Thou without the word. And this should again be taken verbatim, "wordly"—literally.

A word cannot be manipulated like a term: it cannot be merely repeated nor can it be simply translated. Word and space belong to the word qua word—word, like Man, is also a temporal being. Each word is unique. Each time I say, "Yes," "Daddy," "I love you," "I disagree," "God," "Peter," "justice," it is not a mere labeling for the sake of clarification and classification. It is a calling or an answering (i.e., a swearing, an oath) for the sake of saying something that is inseparable from the saying itself and that cannot be reduced to the mere "contents" of the saying. The content depends on the container, and vice versa. Both belong together. Every authentic word is a sacrament. It is a vow, a commitment; it implies a fidelity and the risk that you may not admit my cry, my affirmation, my prayer, my opinion, or understand my saying. A word reveals me to you and cannot be reduced to just the objective or objectifiable statement. Each word is anew each time it is said. It does not produce boredom, nausea. It is a new invention, a new language each time, with nuances that only those in concurrence, "in phase," within the myth will understand and follow. "Darling" is a ridiculous word heard in the it-language. It is something that a "third person" has heard so often, yet it is ever new for the sincere speaker and the Thou receiving it. I could equally have written, "I hate you," as an example, of course. If I say, "I hate you," I am saying much more, doing much more than pointing out a concept of hatred and referring it to you. When I give my word, I give myself, my fidelity, my life: it is me. Fidelity to terms is meaningless. Fidelity to words is constitutive of the word itself.

Now it may be clearer why the word, living words, a language as a mode of being human, cannot be merely translated as a simple repetition at another pitch. If at all, it has to be reenacted

in a new setting. It has to be a liturgical and creative act.[104] You cannot translate the Vedas. You have to sing and pray them anew, and yet you may use another idiom, another rhythm. You may change the flute and the drum, the mode and the rhythm, and yet you "know" (*Veda*) that you are doing the same "in memory of him" (*anamnesis*). You cannot substitute words. You have to "speak" the music anew with different instruments. The proper function of the word is to name—as the Vedas and the Bible attest. The original case of the word is the vocative, not the nominative, much less the obliques. Each word is fruit of a calling in a double sense: you call and you are called. Every word is an invocation and an answer. Every *parole* as *acte individuel* is also *langue* as *fait social*, to use Saussure's *language*. You speak words as you call persons: words have a sense; you name things as you mean things: things have a meaning; you term objects as you intend concepts: terms have a reference.

I have summed up this complex problematic affirming that the real word is a symbol and not a sign. The symbol is not objectifiable—because it is not "over there." If something is not a symbol for you, then it is not a symbol (for you) and you cannot treat it as a symbol: if you do not understand a word, you do not understand it. It can certainly be explained, but you do not catch the sense of the word until it speaks directly to you without explanation or translation. The symbol is also not mere subjectivity—because it is not "over here." You cannot set up symbols at will. "Die Sprache spricht," Heidegger would say, repeating exactly what *Śabarācārya* had written over a millennium before: "*Śabda* speaks, it makes known." We cannot postulate symbols as we can signs and axioms. A symbol is natural and not artificial. It defies manipulation. With what would you make people recognize artificial symbols as symbols? Those most elementary factors by which you would explain the would-be symbol, which apparently do not need further explanation—those are the real symbols. The symbols symbolize, and you do not confuse the symbol with the symbolized, but neither do you separate them. The symbol is the symbolizing. You could not know and love me if I were without a body. Yet, though in a way I am my body, I am not just the body you see or know (nor am I my body *plus* something else). My body is my symbol. Their relation is constitutive. This relation is the symbol.

The name "relation" used in the previous paragraph should be explained. Since Aristotle, the main connotation of the name "relation" seems to indicate a total subordination to the things it relates. Relations were considered to be mere accidents of substances. And this notion has practically prevailed in the West in spite of the fact that the entire patristic and Scholastic speculation on the Trinity would vouch for the use I am making of the name "relation." The traditional understanding of the Trinity, in fact, interprets the "divine persons" as subsistent relations. That *things* are only relations is a central Buddhist insight and should also convince those who reflect on the etymology of the name itself (a "thing" is an assembly—*Versammlung*). Taking a hint from Zubiri I could have spoken of "respectiveness" instead of "relationship" to connote that our "relation" is not something subsidiary to some independent substances which it relates, but that it constitutes the related things as much as it does their "relation." The related things are such because they look at each other, and it is this look that makes them. This is the basic meaning of the word "respectiveness." Things *are*, respecting each other, and are such because of their mutual respect.

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[104] By way of illustration I offer a sad anecdote. In writing about translation in a recent book on the Vedas I insisted that the reader should be brought close to re-enacting "cultically" the Vedic Experience for himself. Each time the manuscript was copied, it was rewritten "culturally." I corrected it again and again up to the page proofs. The printed text says obviously "culturally"! Typists, printers, and academics have all been won over to the scientific outlook. Should I have written "cultically" in spite of having the dictionary in my favor?

To revert to our case, a word is not a mere relation in the etymological sense of carrying back to the subject the "meaning" of the object, or in the Aristotelian sense of an accident connecting the word of ideas and concepts with human subjects. A word is more than just a connecting link. It is the very expression of the self-same respectiveness that makes or rather lets things be what they are.

This means also that there is no word without connection with an entire language and a group of people. A totally isolated word "in itself" is not a word. The word is not a phenomenon: it cannot be abstracted from its dwelling place without ceasing to be what it is. The Heideggerian metaphor "Haus des Seins" could be rendered more vividly by "la vivienda del ser," where "vivienda" is not just the house that each word offers but its own life. Fray Luis de León still uses the word "vivienda" not only for where we live, but for how One lives, the manner and form of life. Language is the *vivienda* of Being, the all-encompassing life of Reality. The word is the *habitat* of Being: that which *has* Being. To put it differently: the "*itself*" of the word is an "I-Thou-It-self"; it is the "in-between" or the respectiveness, and not a mere *it*. A word "in itself" means the integral word, the linguisticality in which all speakable things share: it means a word in its-self.

This may become more plausible if we recall the traditional sense of the blasphemy, the *mantra*, or the still living meaning of a lie.

A blasphemy is a word without love, with actual hatred, and thus it is a hurting sound, a real (verbal) offense, something (i.e., a speech, *phemos*, from *phanay*, to speak) that harms (*blabé*, from *blaptô*, to hurt—cf. the root *mlas* [*mls*]). A *mantra* is a powerful word not by means of magic, but due to the intrinsic power inherent in the unbroken wholeness of a sound that provokes thinking, because it comes from *man*, to think (*cf. manas*, the spirit, "mind"). A lie is not just factual incorrectness in an objective statement, but something destructive of my own being—or of yours, the listener's precisely because the lie destroys the word. Any authentic word is a living and enlivening communication, revealing a latent communion between the speaker and the hearer (of the word).

A word can be wrong, but no real word that includes its four dimensions mentioned above can be a pure lie. It would cease to be a complete word. It would not say what it professes to say. An error is a factual mistake somewhere, generally a lack of correspondence. A lie as a word is a contradiction *in terminis*. Just so, false silver is false, precisely because it is not silver, but only looks like it, to quote a famous example. A lie, qua lie, only looks like a word without being one. I may say, "[You are] broke," and it may be an error if you are not, but I am not really saying it if I utter the sentence without believing it to be the case. In that case I am using the sounds of the sentence to cheat, hurt, encourage you, or to express whatever other intention I may have. And this latter is that I am really saying. If you happen to detect my hidden meaning, the word may then say something. This is the case with polite phrases. They are not lies. They are spontaneously accepted symbols of human relations. And the proof is in the gaffes we commit when coming from another cultural milieu.[105] What we believe that is said when a lie is uttered saves that word from total annihilation. The word is only that sphere in which the I and the Thou, the speaker and the spoken-to, commune. Any preacher, any teacher, any parent or person in authority can immediately detect an empty repetition of words. Certainly the words have meaning in themselves, but they are not real words when devoid of any personal conviction and incarnation in one's life, or in that of the hearer.

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[105] "Esta es su casa," says the Spanish host—and the next day the German friend arrives with luggage and family.

The word is not something incidental to things, but it is not their *noumenon* either. Any reduction of the word to its "pure" meaning kills the word qua word. Every word says a sentence and utters a commitment. Every real word is respectiveness. It is *mythos* and *logos* at the same time. Words are only words if integrated in the whole linguistic world that gives them life and meaning.[106]

Words, like all symbols, have a life of their own. A word, to be a word, has to be spoken; and each time it is spoken it is new and acquires also a new meaning, in imperceptible shades at first, but in time there is considerable change. On the one hand, every word has a proper character, which I have called *ontonomy*, an internal relatedness to its own past and history, a proper consistency. We cannot use words at whim; on the other hand, this very ontonomy makes the words dependent on our use of them and vulnerable to our own interpretations. We speak of living words, and the expression is adequate. The life of a word is similar to the life of a person. We are free. We can even kill ourselves (and others); we can direct our lives in one or another direction. Yet we cannot change the reality and the ontonomic functioning of life. We share in the life and we live in life; we live it and are it, without having been its creators. Likewise with words. We share in the "life" of a word when learning and using it; we can even modify its meaning, and in fact we do just that; but we can do it only within and with the word itself. A living word has no author (*apauruṣeya*). Nobody postulates, "This is what such and such a word is going to mean." That would be a label, a sign, not a word. We don't have a song until we sing. We don't have a word until we speak and somebody else understands! The word is the symbol par excellence.

Now, the confusion between terms and words is at the root of the fall of any culture. It shows that the particular culture is no longer alive. The culture has fossilized. The means have become the ends, and the ends have been forgotten. Language has then ceased to be a mediator and has become an intermediary—thus everything real is postponed (until Godot comes), the goods are delivered, the earthly paradise arrives. The mediator, unlike the intermediary, is not a broker, putting two contending partners in relation for a fee. It is not a third party (the "third person") allegedly unbiased and impartial, relating the speaker and the spoken-to by means of the spoken-of, the "meaning of the thing." By what means would the intermediary relate? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* (Who will guard the guard?)

The word, on the contrary, is a mediator, participating in both the nature of the speaker and the receiver. Or rather, the speaker and the receiver are such because they share in the word, because they speak and hear. The word is primordial.

If concepts are related to terms, experiences are connected to words. If a concept is a *medium quod*, an experience is a *medium quo*. Experience is contact without intermediary, is an immediate "touch." To examine now whether there would be wordless experiences would distract us from our central issue. In any case I am not going to "speak" now about the "unspeakable" or comment on the "experience of nothingness" as the very nothingness of the experience. Almost all traditions have recognized the inner word, which, for whatever reasons, remains externally unspoken and forces us to "say" it is "unspeakable" until it bursts forth in a new revelation.

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[106] I still remember the interpretation of *Murder in the Cathedral* by some very intelligent MA students of English literature at a prestigious South Indian university. Though they knew the English idioms very well, they knew practically nothing about Christianity, martyrdom, the European Middle Ages, and the Western myths implicit in T. S. Eliot's drama. It is not that they could not understand, for instance, how as long as people were ready to die for their faith, there would be hope. It is that they understood Archbishop Becket's world as a kind of science-fiction of strange beings totally unrelated to the real human condition as they were seeing it.

Be this as it may, the word is ultimate instance. The word reveals, and I will have to take the word back with all its implication, if I have uttered an idle word.[107]

There is a very simple criterion for differentiating terms from words. It can be put in two different ways. We can use terms in which we do not believe without lying. We cannot do the same with words. We can use and use very correctly a particular sound, a proper term to designate the object meant by that term. It is there repetition. No word, on the other hand, can be properly repeated. A word is each time somewhat different, each time unveils something new, for the speaker, the spoken-to, or perhaps for the spoken-of. The word is by its own nature always analogous. It has a life of its own. We can tire of sticking the same label on, even if it is to say with our lips, "I love you." We can never tire of speaking real words, even if it is to say the "same" advice or to ask or give the "same" pardon seventy times seven times. Any parent, teacher, or priest will know what I mean.

This is a common experience we have with our authentic words: they cannot be merely repeated, they have to be reenacted. You have given a good lecture, an inspired sermon; you have had a lively conversation, a living dialogue. You are invited later to a dull dinner party, and people ask you what you have said that you seem so excited. You cannot repeat yourself; you cannot recount, reenact the living word. The report is not the thing; the chronicle is a distortion (unless, of course, it re-creates the entire scene once again: then it is more than chronicle, it is drama, theatre in the best sense of the word).

Now, it is not that the frame, the atmosphere, that is, the externals were not the same. In another situation you can repeat yourself, because you reenact once again the "same" words in another living context. What is not the same is the word itself (or the words themselves, the speech) because word is more than just "intellectual" content, than "meaning." Word is relation, is love as much as meaning, embraces the listener as much as the speaker; it entails your voice as much as the ears and hearts of those with whom you communicate: they elicit from you the adequate words. The audience belongs to the speech as much as the speaker (although not in the same proportion).

The word is only complete when it displays its four dimensions.

It may be retorted that I am using the name "word" in a very restricted sense, or rather in a very lofty manner and not in the ordinary way in which the name is used. And I would agree with the latter part of the criticism, because what I am declaring is precisely the degeneration of the word—which is the full and complex reality that I am trying to describe—into "words, words, words," to quote from that European period when the sacramental power and reality of the word began to fade away in order to give place to the nominalistic substitution of terms. I should clarify further that terms, labels, formulae, algebra, and science are necessities of great

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[107] *Cf.* the *argon, otiosum*, ineffective, powerless "word" of which the Gospel speaks and for which judgment is going to be demanded from us.

[108] I recall sad anecdotes of non-Muslims, habitants of a technological and thus nominalist society, repeating without qualms the Muslim formula of faith (in order to enter into mosques) and laughing at the credulity of the guardians who could not believe that the most sacred words (the *shahāda* or the oral profession of the *tawḥīd* [the declaration of unity]) could be used as mere terms.

value. I am only trying to recover the equilibrium, to recall, quoting the Rig Veda, that the word is measured in four quarters: the wise know it all, but only the fourth quarter is spoken by men. Or, paraphrasing a psalm: the Word is one, but we split it threefold: the "word" that I *say*, that which you *hear*, and that which *discloses* itself. In the word the constellation of the "three persons" meets: the I, the Thou, and the It; the *am*, the *are*, and the *is*.

Let us sum up by clarifying the nomenclature. Here we cannot go back to Rome, Greece, or India: *nomen, verbum, sermo (ratio); onoma, rhēma, logos;* or *vāc, śabda, sphoṭa* do not render univocally what I have called in English *name, term,* and *word*.

Name can be used in a generic way for both term and word. Every term and every word is a name. It names something. But it names is the meaning of the name. Names name and have a "named" that we call meaning. But meaning is an ambivalent designation. It refers to "something" that is "meant" (named) in the name. If we recall the etymology, we may concur in understanding meaning as that which speaks to the mind. A meaningless term or word is neither term nor word. The name (from *gnō, jñā:* to know) is that which lets know. Now the meaning that the name "lets know" can be twofold: it lets us know something by merely pointing toward *it*, or it lets us know something by letting *us* be known, involving us in the process. The former is the case of the *term*. A term terms and has termed (terminally) an object. A term designates something that is its reference. The reference is that to which the term refers. It refers to the sulfuric acid in the bottle and in general. The term is a sign. A sign signifies. Terms have signification in the restrictive "meaning"; that is, terms are signs signifying something outside themselves. Terms have only a conventional connection with the reference. The name, we said, is that which lets us know. The ecstatic attitude slides over the name (term) in order to reach the "thing," which is then discovered as a mere concept, as the object intended in and by the name. But the name can let us know by letting *us* know; by following us to know and be known, by making it possible for us to be the knower. Then we properly have the *word*.

A word has sense, which implies a direction and a sensual correlate. Words are words when they establish a direction and place us in the direction between the speaker and the spoken-of, when they set us both (speaker and listener) in the direction toward the "contents," which cannot be separated from the sensual "container" of the intellectual "contained." I would agree with Ebner in saying that the faculty of the word is the sixth sense of the human being: the intellect, this latter considered as the intellectual or spiritual sense of Man. The intellectual sense "apprehends" the integrality of the word in a similar manner as the sensual senses "grasp" the sensual reality—sometimes called "sense-objects." And in the same manner that the sensual reality is not a mere "object" or a pure subject (a red color or a particular sound is neither alone in the "thing," nor in the air only, nor in my eye or ear exclusively), the spiritual reality is neither over there in an "intellectual" world, nor just a convolution on the brain. The sense of a word is inseparable from the word and co-involves us with it. We apprehend the sense of a word because at the same time we are apprehended by it. The sense is in the word. The sensual and the spiritual meet in the word. In the *Upaniṣads* and a great part of the Indian tradition, the word is the mediation between body and mind. The dichotomy between the Cartesian *res extensa* and *res cogitans* breaks down in the word.

In short, we are endowed with the power of naming: we use terms (which are signs) to designate references, and we speak words (which are symbols) to live in communion with our fellow beings.

As a last remark: For the sake of analysis, I have been distinguishing, but this should not be understood as separating. It would represent the very opposite of all that this study intends to convey. In spite of all the warnings of science regarding the formal structure of its

categories, every term has a "verbal" charge that cannot be totally eliminated—and the more a term is used, the greater can its share in the word become. Again, every word has a great amount of "terminal" character. What, verbally speaking, is fanaticism if not the negation of the verbal flexibility of words, converting them into univocal terms?*

Are Words of Scripture Universal Religious Categories? Christian Language for the Third Millennium

Christianity Is a Religion of the Word

Christianity is neither a religion of the Earth (like so many telluric traditions) nor a religion of the Book (like some other Abrahamic religions). Christianity is a religion of the Word (of the Word made flesh in Christ, and the Word incarnate in every Christian— ultimately in every man). Sacraments and Liturgy are all events of the Word.[109] To put my point in a nutshell: the word is word when it is spoken and therefore heard (*Śruti*)—when it is *experienced* as saying something to us, and understood. This amounts to affirming the primacy of the *critical experience*.

We should remember, especially in India, the theology of the Word (*Śabda, vāc*) of the Indian philosophical systems, which could (and should) enrich the Christian exegesis of this third millennium.[110] The modern West is proud of having unified the world—in its *own* way, obviously. Even philosophy and theology claim a certain universality, beyond their traditional boundaries—which can only be convincingly sustained if they are symbols and not concepts. Christianity since olden times seems to have an inbuilt fundamental pretense at being universal, which also implies a radical *kenosis*.

"*Urbi et orbi*" is a telling expression. In spite of its abuse, it says that in as much as the *orbis* is assimilated to the *urbs*, and only in as much—in as much as the *world* is an image of the *city*—the message is valid and meaningful. In as much as the language of the *urbs* (of Christianity in this case) is understood and spoken by the *orbis*, by the wide world, Christian utterances may make sense. But to pretend that everybody should understand our language, be it English, mathematics, or the Christian language, is still rampant colonialism—well-intentioned as it may be.[111]

My point is not particular regarding English, or mathematical-scientific language, for instance. Both are not universalizable without a reductionism of the human heritage.

My point here is theological and refers to the *Christian language*. I submit that if this language has to be freely spoken—that is, creatively, outside the West and its colonies—it needs a basic transformation. Neither the peoples of Africa or Asia speak—that is, understand, vibrate, express themselves—in Christian language. They live in other universes. There is still more. The over 200 millions of Christians in Asia, for instance, begin to manifest the desire

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* This article reproduces with minor modifications my contribution in *Esistenza, Mito, Ermeneutica*, ed. M. M. Olivetti (Padova: CEDAM; Rome: Archivio di Filosofia, 1980).

[109] Part of this contribution has been published as a Response to Cardinal Tomko in P. Moizes and L. Swidler, *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1990).

[110] Since I have been dealing with this topic for decades I am obliged to use self-quotations for the sake of brevity.

[111] I understand that the English language, which has no grammatical way to distinguish gender from sex, has prompted the feminist reaction of a divisive language, adding constantly "his/her." But I detect the same patriarchal syndrome in the dialectical and discursive language. Let's not give males the monopoly on Man and subordinate the ladies to be "fe-males" or "wo-men."

to speak their own languages when expressing their Christian faith. The circumcision of the body was abolished, but the first two millennia of Christianity seem to require the circumcision of the mind. "How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?," asks Psalm 137:4 (NEB). If this was valid for Israel, no further comment is needed.

Until now those Christians of the so-called third world spoke a learned and borrowed language. Needless to say, I am not referring to grammars of English or Tamil. I am speaking of the deepest form of reenacting and expressing one's own life—a life of faith. Language is more than an instrument of information. It is a form of human communion. This is the problem.

For the purpose of this chapter, I shall limit myself to some reflections on the possible Christian language in a context outside the Western world.[112]

I would like to insist that this is an inner-Christian reflection. One could speak another language, but this is not our concern here—nor the specific problematic regarding concreteness and universality as seen by the Christian perspective.[113]

A Nonary of Sūtra on Christian Language

1. *During two millennia the Christian language has been the biblical language received in and interpreted within a predominantly Hellenistic matrix.*

Christian theology (or theologies) is an astounding monument of human culture. An insignificant seed, which could not be found even in an empty tomb, has grown into a mighty tree nourished by a double and vital sap of a *fides quaerens intellectum* and an *intellectus quaerens fidem*—by theology inspiring philosophy and by philosophy sustaining theology. It has produced a many-faceted and extremely rich theology understood as *Logos* of God in the double sense of the genitive: our *logos* of (about) *theos*, and our listening to the *logos* of *ho theos*. It is one of the most extraordinary phyla of human history.

Concerned with its inner growth and self-understanding, and fruit also of historical circumstances, Christian thought, except in its formative period, has been rather introverted. It has developed its theology within the cultural boundaries of the Western world and its colonies. The *oikoumene* was just the culturally Western *oikos*. Hinduism offers another splendid example of a similar introverted growth—with the difference, however, that Christianity holds a single point of reference whereas Hinduism does not. But the human world is wider. The Abrahamic phylum, together with all its enrichments, is not unique. Nor is the Indic, for that matter. Today's unavoidable theological question is whether the Abrahamic phylum offers the uniquely possible Christian language.

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2. *The present-day's increasing awareness of cultural and religious pluralism radically challenges the very nature of Christian theology.*

Its challenges:

a. Its Method

The belief that God has spoken to Christians and the conviction that God has imparted a secret to them (a unique revelation) do not exclude the possibility that God may have disclosed the same or the other aspects of the divine Mystery to other peoples. Divine Mystery is infinite. Even the most immediate experience of divine revelation does not weaken the

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dictum that *quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*—that "anything that is received, it is received within the categories of the understanding of the recipient." Unless we make of revelation a crass anthropomorphic caricature, we cannot curtail divine initiative. God is free to tell a secret, and even a different secret, when and to whom He pleases using the overall anthropomorphic character of the current concept of revelation and of God.

In short, the method for approaching the divine Mystery in order to understand its meaning as much as possible requires knowledge of the context in which that Mystery discloses itself. Christian theology presupposes implicitly a "theology" of "religions," whereby these two words should not be presupposed as fixed concepts.

The corollary is clear. There can be today no convincing Christian theology (nor any philosophical reflection on any religion) without taking into consideration the wider spectrum of the different religious traditions of the world. The challenge is unavoidable: Christian theology, qua Christian theology, cannot legitimately be a purely internal affair of indoor speculation, if it has to have any relevance to the world outside itself. The Christian presuppositions, which alone make Christian language meaningful, are not universally shared by the peoples of the world. If we use the word "God," for instance, we cannot assume that this word makes sense to everybody—and in the same manner. This amounts to saying that the contemporary theological method, if it has to be *catholic* (complete), cannot be solely "ad usum nostrorum," only for internal use. This does not contradict the legitimacy of a sound esoterism, as most religions also have.

b. Its Contents

God might have spoken a particular language. By "language," I understand not just grammatical idioms but the whole range of human communicable intelligibility. Now, this language has to be understood, transmitted, and eventually translated. It is a triple mediation that prevents us from absolutizing any human statement.

We mentioned "God," and we might as well have said "history" as another example of what Christian theology called *preambula fidei*.[114] Now, other cultures and religions have other languages, other perceptions of reality. These cultures cannot be called into question without understanding them, and they cannot be understood without somewhat sharing in the presuppositions of such cultures. Further, we cannot legitimately criticize these presuppositions from our own assumptions alone, or from a presupposition-less (nonexisting) viewpoint.[115]

To assume only one valid *cosmology* is perhaps one of the most deleterious cultural blunders of modernity—even if we call it a "scientific cosmology."[116] Western culture, which relativizes so easily other worldviews, should also be open to relativize its own cosmology, even its astronomy. Often I have cited the shift from Christian absolutism to the new "dogma" of *extra scientiam nulla salus*, whereby *scientia* means, obviously, modern science—"outside [modern] science there is no salvation." In sum, is the Christian "revelation" tied to a single conception of the universe? Are the others wrong by virtue of a divine imperative?

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[114] Cf. my assertion that *fundamental theology* should not assume fixed *preambula fidei*, but study the possibility of using any cultural *preambula* as basis for an incarnated theology, in "Metatheology as Fundamental Theology," *Concilium* 6, no. 5 (June 1969), reprinted in *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 321–34.

[115] An assumption is something we set at the start of our thinking about something. A presupposition (*prae-subpositio*) is something we uncritically or unreflectively take for granted. It belongs to the *mythos*.

[116] By *kosmology* I understand not a different view of the world (cosmology) but a different world; nor a different discourse about the universe but a different *universe* (also of discourse). The rest is still kryptokantianism of accepting (uncritically) a "Ding an sich" [a thing in itself], a *noumenon*.

3. *Concreteness versus universality. This is the challenge of the third Christian millennium.*

The very affirmation that Man is a *natural* animal (and thus that there is a universal common human nature) is already a *cultural* statement. Man is a cultural animal as well, and each culture has a different self-understanding, world-consciousness, and God-perception. We can no longer consider the Mediterranean world as the human *oikoumenè*, even if we call the present-day worldview a "scientific" one. As I have written time and again, modern science is not neutral nor universal.

The challenge is thus: Is Christianity a concrete religion, or does it bud forth into a more universal *Christianness*?[117] In the first case it is one religion among many and needs to be evaluated both according to its own intrinsic norms and its consistency with the common features of what religion is. In the second case, notwithstanding the fact that Christianity may continue as a concrete religion, it bursts, as it were, and liberates a meta-confessional core not confined to a particular tradition.[118] This Christianness is the name for humanness as Christians would understand themselves as the "Fullness of Man."[119]

I am not defending "Christian humanism," as it is generally understood as a spirituality that denies transcendence.[120] I am saying that Christianness sees the *humanum* as the fulfillment and perfection of Man. Man may have a universal common nature, but the very notion of this nature is concrete and limited and, in our case, already tinged with Christian assumptions.

In other words, the catholicity of the Christic fact can be interpreted as a geographical and cultural category or as a quality that, like salt, enhances the taste of any food, or like light, which illumines in different colors the body it touches according to the nature of those very bodies.

4. *This challenge poses a dilemma: either the circumcision of the mind is a requisite for being Christian or such a requirement is abolished.*

We can no longer hold the opinion of an *anima naturaliter Christiana*, interpreting it as *anima culturaliter Christiana*, in the sense of one *single* culture—broadly as this culture may be encompassing several subcultures. It has to be recognized that there also exist many nonbiblical ways of thinking, that the very patterns of intelligibility of the human race are different—sometimes mutually irreducible and often incommensurable.

Putting it briefly, the *praeparatio culturalis* and much less the *technologica* cannot be a *praeparatio evangelica*, whatever this latter may be. Or in traditional theological language, the *praeambula fidei* should be natural and not cultural. Language is a natural human phenomenon, but languages are cultural. Therefore, there are no natural "preambula"—no universal presuppositions for faith.[121]

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[117] Cf. the notion of *Christianness* as different from Christendom and Christianity in John Hick and Paul Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 104–7. Cf. Volume III, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

[118] While Kierkegaard believed that Christendom is distorted Christianity, I am not saying that this latter is the distortion of Christianness. I affirm that the Christic seed carried by Christians is growing now outside the boundaries of Christianity, like centuries ago it grew outside the walls of Christendom. I speak here of the three kairological moments: Christendom (political), Christianity (doctrinal), Christianness (experiential).

[119] Cf. R. Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004). Now in Volume III, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

[120] Cf. my book *Humanismo y Cruz* (Madrid: Rialp, 1963).

[121] Cf. Mt 11:25.

As I have put it often: Does one need to be spiritually a Semite and intellectually a Greek in order to be Christian? It goes without saying that I put this question in full admiration for Abrahamic spirituality and Hellenic thinking, further recognizing that these two notions are broad enough to cover a great variety of interpretations. But they do not exhaust the *humanum*, I submit.

The dilemma should be taken in *all* its depth. Either circumcision of the mind according to biblical categories is a requisite for being an enlightened Christian, or the Christic fact is liberated from one particular *forma mentis*. It is undeniable that in order to understand the biblical revelation, as it has been interpreted so far, one needs a way of thinking, which is alien to most Asian mentalities. There is nothing wrong with circumcision, either of the body, the mind, or both. But we should be aware of the fact that it remains circumcision, and draw the consequences. The problem is not *how* "to cross the Rubicon" because it remains within the myth of history, but *who* crosses it. The challenge is not to conquer another territory, a new expansion. The problem is Julius Caesar. It is a great thing to St. Paul, to be a *civis romanus*, but many a culture does not aspire after that citizenship or even grasp what advantages it may bring.

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5. *Either horn of the dilemma is legitimate.*

No major *theologumenon* would be lost in either answer. *Circumcision*, like baptism or any other initiation, may be a symbol either of particularity or of concreteness. The human existential way for universality *is* concreteness. The proper love for one's parents, children, spouse, vocation, people, and religion entails neither abhorrence for the other nor even the belief that the loved ones are *objectively* the best. Reality is a fabric of relationships. Anything real is concrete, and it is in its concreteness that it mirrors the whole universe. We need only to open the third eye.

Christianity, in our case, could be catholic, not in a geographical or cultural sense, but qualitatively, as St. Augustine suggests when he translates *kath'holou* not as universal but as *secundum totum*, that is, as that religion which to its believers offers them all they need for their fulfillment and salvation. It *is* existentially complete—perfect, if we remember the etymology.

Christian education would consist in drawing forth (*educere*) a universalizable meaning out of a concrete symbol an icon of the whole—which cannot be a concept. *Non-circumcision*, similarly, may be a symbol either for universality or for generality. The latter is an abstraction. The former is an urge of the human mind. But urge for universality belongs to the order of the *mythos*, not of the *logos*. This urge is unfolded and often unspoken. It cannot be verbalized in concepts. Everybody wants to know, to quote Aristotle, or to be happy, to cite Thomas Aquinas, but the notions and the contents of such knowledge or happiness vary, and, therefore, also the means to reach them or the places where to find them.

Christianness, in our case, could be catholic as complete, or rather as transcendental, that is, as the concrete (Christian) way of embodying full humanness. It would be, not a particular doctrine, but a concrete realization of what is transcendentally linked to the fulfillment of the *humanum*. Christian education would consist in drawing forth from the variety of human forms not an underlying essence, but a transcendental symbolism.

In sum, each religion has a claim to concrete catholicity and to mythical universality. Seen from another angle, each religion is a dimension of the other. We could speak, with all due qualifications, of a certain religious *perichoresis*, an interpenetration of the one into the other. This is why the intrareligious dialogue is possible.[122] Did not Nicholas of Cusa describe all religions as "quaedam locutiones, verbi Dei sive rationis aeternae"?

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[122] Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999). Now in Volume VI, Part 2 of this *Opera Omnia*.

Here we detect clearly two ways of thinking, that is, to approach reality so as to find intelligibility. If Christianity is a true religion, so one may argue, it fulfills the essence of religion. Now, if the essence is the *specific* difference, it follows that the other religions are not true religions or are *only* halfway to reaching it. On the other hand, if the "essence" is not the specific difference, but the generic quality of a being, other religions can also share in that true essence. *Una religio in rituum varietate* (one religion in a diversity of rituals), said the same Cardinal Cusanus. I repeat that colonialism amounts to the acceptance of the *mythos* that one single culture (monoculturalism) can explain the immense variety of the human experience.

6. *Different Consequences: Christianity or Christianness*

The present-day state of the question allows us to make a Viṣṇu stride. Hardly anybody today defends a rigid Christian exclusivity, and many are worried by the claim of an undifferentiated inclusivity—although in both cases we should qualify those too-rough statements. Christianity is becoming more and more open and is being rescued from the inertia of the past—in spite of understandable fundamentalist backlashes. But how far can the openness go? Where do we draw the line of Christian identity? Elsewhere I have distinguished between self-conscious and internal identity from foreign and external *identification*. What should we then understand by Christianity?

The approach to the answer may offer us an example of different ways of thinking. I may consider here only a Semitic and an Indic example, provided we remain well aware of the oversimplification. For the former, based on the primacy of the principle of noncontradiction, a Christian is not a non-Christian. The Christian has to be distinct and eventually separated (*sanctus*). To be different is a positive quality: "a woman of distinction." For the latter, based on the primacy of the principle of identity, a Christian is anyone who does not explicitly confess to being a non-Christian—anyone who does not choose excommunicating oneself from the Christian. It is plain contradiction, for instance, to assert that I am a Christian and a non-Christian, but it is not contradictory to say that I am a Christian and a Hindū—what remains is to discuss the identity of the two.

We have here two different ways of self-understanding. The consequences are obviously different. On the one hand, we have a religion called Christianity, distinguishable from all others. On the other hand, we have a set of experiences (love of God and of neighbor, truthfulness, fidelity, humility, openness, freedom . . .), which for Christians have Christian symbols and for others some different sets of *homeomorphic equivalents*. Christianness is then not a "religion" in the sociological sense of the word, but the Christian way of experiencing the religious dimension of Man in whatever cultural pattern—provided one sincerely confesses this experience to be Christian and is as such accepted by a Christian community.[123]

7. *Only a kenotic and dekerygmatized Christ can sustain the second part of the alternative.*

It has been said time and again, mainly from Asian non-Christian sources in view of the Christian link with the Semitic way of thinking, that Christian self-consciousness will never be able to take experience as the paramount human access to reality, to accept that every single being has Christ-nature (equivalent to Buddha-nature), to recognize that God is only a concrete and not a universal symbol, to overcome the belief in an exclusively

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[123] Cf. R. Panikkar, "On Christian Identity: Who Is a Christian?," in *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*, ed. C. Cornille (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 121–44.

homogeneous evolution of dogma, or to apply *metanoia* to itself, not only as changing the *nous* but as transcending it.

I submit that if Asian Christians ever come to have a nonsecondary place in Christian theology, these issues may trigger a theological mutation.[124] The kenosis of Christ would be here understood not only as an act of humility, but as an ontological notion for which Christian metaphysics is little prepared.[125] Emptiness (*Śûnyata*) is not annihilation, Nothingness is the horizon of Being . . . the *mythos* out of which the *logos* emerges.[126] Similarly, dekerygmatization does not mean that the injunction to chant, witness, proclaim is no longer valid. It means, however, that we do not confuse the vital attitude of sharing joy and life with the intellectual contents with which we also need to express that deeper motion of the Spirit. *Keryso* means to announce, to invoke in Greek, and *Kâruh* means a singer in Sanskrit.

In sum, the kenosis of Christ rescues Christian theology from falling into the danger of *christomonism*. The intellectual dekerygmatization of the Christian experience saves it from falling into being just an ideology. In one sentence: the work of the Spirit cannot be subordinated to the *Logos*.

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8. *This second part of the alternative demands passing from a tribal Christology to a polymorphic Christophany.*

Christian scholars do not find it abusive language to speak of Yahweh as a tribal God prior to the purification of its notion effected mainly by the prophets of Israel. One may as well foresee that to the Christians of the third Christian millennium is reserved the task of overcoming a tribal Christology by a *Christophany* that allows Christians to see the work of Christ everywhere without assuming that they have a better grasp on or a monopoly of that Mystery that has many names and that has been revealed to them in a unique way. In other words, the mystical Christ is not identical with the cosmic Christ. The cosmic Christ is a cosmological belief. The mystical Christ belongs to the Christian belief in the resurrection, which allows the Christian to experience a christophany in any manifestation of Reality, although, as any belief, it has also cosmological assumptions. The *Unknown Christ of Hinduism* is not the Christ known to Christians and unknown to Hindus, but that Mystery unknown to Christians and known to Hindus by many other names, but in which Christians cannot but recognize the presence of Christ.[127] The same light illumines different bodies polychromatically—as I have already said.

This does not imply that everybody is a member of Christianity, but at the same time, it does not split human ultimate consciousness into incommunicable compartments. On the doctrinal and even intellectual level, systems may be incompatible, religions may be incommensurable—but not by bread alone, not by *logos* alone does Man live; there is also

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[124] Cf. R. Panikkar, "Indian Theology: A Theological Mutation," in *Theologizing in India*, ed. A. Amaladoss, J. Gispert Sauch, and T. K. John (Bangalore: TPI, 1981), 23–42; and in general the entire volume.

[125] The King James Authorized Version goes up to the extent of translating the *heauton ekenosen* (*exinanivit semetipsum*) (Phil 2:7) as "made himself of no reputation," corrected later on in many editions ("emptied himself," "made himself nothing").

[126] I could quote the philosophers of the so-called Kyoto School to substantiate and qualify this assertion.

[127] Cf. the second edition of R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), spelling out what was cryptically written in the first. Now in Volume VII of this *Opera Omnia*.

the Spirit enlivening Man and the universe. I have already said that for a Christian mystical theology, every being is a *Christophany*.[128] But this is only a particular language. It is the language in which the epiphany of Reality discloses itself to the Christian. The Christophany is apophatic. Epiphanies are epiphenomena, but the phenomena are real—as phenomena, as Thomas Aquinas would say.[129]

Another example may clarify this point. There is much talk about inculturation today. I am not entering here into the discussion—although I suspect a still-lingering theological colonialism.[130] I am saying only that one cannot dismiss too quickly the assertion that the Christian dogma of the incarnation is already a sort of inculturation. In fact it has a coherent and plausible meaning only within a certain cultural framework. This means that, in spite of the urge to universality, any human thought or act is concrete, contingent, limited, and ultimately a scandal to any pretension to universality without concreteness. From Paul to Hegel and von Balthasar, Christian consciousness has struggled with the question; neither can we solve it once and for all, nor "we" alone. This is already my last *sūtra*.

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9. *The problematic calls for a Second Council of Jerusalem—held at Rajagṛha, if need be.*

The two options are legitimate, we said. The deepening of the first will purify Christianity. The striving for the second will liberate Christians and establish transreligious fellowships without necessarily breaking religious affiliations. I called this attitude *ecumenical ecumenism*. The history of humanity is *also* left to human initiative.[131]

In this decisive moment of the world the urgent problems of present-day civilization are also religious issues. Peace, justice, freedom, ecology, hunger, military and technocratic depletion . . . all are theological problems as well because they deal with the destiny of humanity and of the cosmos. To be exclusively concerned with intra-ecclesiastical problems is shortsighted and may distract the church from its mission as traditionally understood since the Greek Fathers. Religions, for all the benefits they have brought, have also been the cause of strife and war.

The great problems of our present time cannot be evaluated, let alone solved, within one single religious or cultural matrix. We need one another. No religion or culture is self-sufficient to alleviate the human predicament. Private opinions and prophetic attitudes are necessary, but not sufficient. Divine interventions are always human events as well. Man, the Divine, and the Cosmos are all involved in the unique adventure of Reality—what I call the *cosmotheandric* intuition.[132]

All this leads me to call not for an exclusively Christian Council—say Vatican II, Geneva N, or Chicago I—but a Council, a *Concilium*, a Calling to *Reconciliation*, as the word suggests. For far too long now we have been fighting each other under all types of pretenses, often with religious "justifications." For far too long we have built private empires of sorts, religious as well as political and economic. War today is no *longer* a sport or a ritual. It is simply a criminal act. Wars do not only begin in Man's minds (UNESCO), they mature in

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[128] Already in my Preface of 1959 to my work *Māyā e Apocalisse* (Rome: Abete, 1966), x.

[129] Cf. *Summa theol.*, I, q. 87. a. I, et al.

[130] Cf. "An Indic Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism from the Perspective of Inculturation," in *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1991).

[131] Cf. Eccles 3:11 (according to the Latin Vulgata!—not to be found in the original): "et mundum tradidit disputationi eorum."

[132] Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993). Now in Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

the religious hearth of humanity. Religious reconciliation is the paramount mission of the religious bodies on earth.

The Christian symbol is Jerusalem II (after Jerusalem I, where circumcision was discussed and abolished). Circumcision was no longer valid for Christians; it was the break with Judaism, but it remained valid for Jews. Baptism may not be the only sign of salvation. Nor was baptism meant to be a substitute for circumcision.[133] Jerusalem is only a symbol.[134] This is why "if need be" has been added to the *sūtra*. This Council could equally be called at Rajagrha, where the first Buddhist Council took place.[135] It should simply take place somewhere. I would make space in it for all living beings, for all is alive and every being has a function to perform, a cosmotheandric council, as the Gāthās, Veda, and Bible suggest.

I may suggest a single point of the Christian agenda as directly related to our problem. For anthropological as well as historical and sociological reasons, that movement without name that in Antioch (the third city of the Imperium) began to call itself Christian followed the anthropological bent to crystallize in institutions and succumbed to the sociological law of being influenced by that which one opposes; that movement became what we today call Christianity: one religion among others struggling for its place and influence on the world. To the Law of Moses they opposed the Law of Christ. To the Hebrew Testament was opposed (also as contraposition or culmination) the Christian Testament; circumcision was superseded by baptism, Saturday by Sunday, and the practices of the Greco-Roman religions became the models of the Christian rites. Perhaps the message of the rabbi of Nazareth was too radical, and the great inquisitors of all times were obliged to adapt, sweeten, civilize, humanize, or pervert it. Is it possible to live without Law? Can we or must we even "love" our enemies? Should we not oppose the evil? And so on.

After two millennia of Christendom/Christianity, after the historical experience of religious wars and the present situation of humanity, should not the Christian community be ready to read "the signs of the times" and receive the *Spirit* that penetrates and renews all and discover that the message of the Nazarene *is* the only "practical" one for survival? It is understandable that such a task cannot be the work of petty counter-inquisitors or great individualities. A *Concilium* is needed.

But this "agenda" is only the Christian part of the same problem, which concerns all the other religions too. Does Buddhism have to reduce itself to the monastic *sangha*? Do the forty centuries of Judaism not say anything more than the "others" are bad and "we" are the victims and the exclusively *chosen* ones, or the fifty centuries of Hinduism that there is not much to transform, reinterpret, and even to reject in the actions of the Arians, and so on? In a word, the last six thousand years of historical experience (we call the previous period "prehistory"), do they not reveal to humanity a tremendous and, at the same time, fascinating mystery of light and darkness, peace and war, love and hate, justice and oppression, of great visions and no minor blindness? If we leave the initiative only to the politicians with their nation-states, they will not do any other thing than reforming the status quo when what is needed is a radical

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[133] Cf. J. L. Segundo, *Et caso Mateo: la crisis de una etica judeo—Cristiana* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1994), esp. 251–70) for a fascinating description of the problematic, which, incidentally, would have avoided the plague of anti-Semitism.

[134] The idea is an old one. The Cusanus speaks of "locum deputans Jerusalem ad hoc aptissimum" [Deeming Jerusalem the most suitable place for it] (*Opera omnia* [Hamburg: Meiner, 1970], 3:69ff.). The Semitic religions up to Islam look to Jerusalem to be the center of the earth.

[135] Many Indologists have doubts about the first Buddhist Council (*saṃgīti*) near Rajagrha around 480 BCE soon after the Buddha's *mahāparanirvāṇa*. The second council at Vaiśāli some 100 or 110 years later is historically certain.

transformation (*metanoia*). Only the religious factor offers a point of reference to overcome the inertia of history. Does it not exist, among human rights, the right of Man to steer his own destiny, even if the wind blows in another direction? It should be obvious that when I speak of religions I am not referring to institutions, but to the religious spirit of Man.[136]

The actual Council is still a utopia, but not the calling for it, the preparation of the peoples, the awakening to the need. Not "United Nations-States," but Concilium of Peoples, *harmonia mundi*.[137]

Religious Language Is Not Synonymous with Sacred Scripture

The relation between a person of faith and Scriptures is that of a person who *experiences* the contents of the readings. We should remember that saying of the last "Father" of the Western church, Pope Gregory the Great, in the sixth century: "The words of the sacred Sayings [*verba sacri eloquii*] . . . grow with the understanding of those who read them."

Before Luther and up to the present day in the Roman Catholic liturgies, after the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, the reader proclaims, "This is the Word of God." It is not said, "This is the Scripture of God." Not only God does not write, not even Christ ever wrote, nor Pythagoras or Socrates, for that matter; as Thomas Aquinas reminds us, the "letter killeth," said St. Paul. Religious language is Word, not Scripture. It is also sound and not only meaning. It is dialogue and not just monologue. One does not speak alone. It is spoken and not only written.

A modern remark is here needed. *Scripta manent*, said the ancients. *Habent sua fata libella*. But sounds can be a written text not a recording today. *Voces perdurant*, we could add. Religious language cannot be a recorded sound either. John of the Cross invites us to annihilate our memory. Even if we had a videotape of the events in Bethlehem, Nazareth, or Jerusalem we could not say, "the Voice of God," as we cannot say, "the Scripture of God." We say instead the "Word of God." The Word is spoken, heard, accepted or rejected, understood or misunderstood, but at any event, on the one level, it passes away, it does not last. It needs to be spoken anew. It needs to be spoken, heard, and reenacted again and again. The living word of religion is always a spoken word. On the other level, it is by passing away, by the sacrifice of the word that it becomes effective. Presence is paramount. *Fides ex auditu*, says Paul; not by reading a script, but by hearing a word uttered by another person. In sum, without the mystical dimension, religions remain without soul.

Speaking about religious language, this could be the occasion to stress the irreplaceable function of oral culture and thus of the human scale. Now, to allow the word to recover its primacy we should learn anew the art of how to listen and not only the "science" of how to read—although *legein* also means to receive, gather, choose, and listen. Nobody would speak if there were nobody to listen.

It is known that the variations of the oral transmission are more minor than the ones of oral documents, in the Veda for instance. There is a pernicious alphabetism that threatens

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[136] Cf. R. Panikkar, "Have 'Religions' the Monopoly of Religion?," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* (Philadelphia) 11, no. 3 (1974): 515–17. Now in the Introduction of Volume II of this *Opera Omnia*.

[137] For many years I have proposed a Permanent Seat for Religious Dialogue, who would have no other intention than to know each other firsthand, overcoming clichés and caricatures and contributing to world peace. Cf. my essay, "L'escando: de les religions," in *Dialeg entre religions. Textos fonamentals*, ed. F. Torradetlot (Madrid: Trotta, 2002), 167–75, and the well-known project of "World Ethos" of Hans Küng.

to castrate one of the most important sources of human life spontaneity, the experience of the uniqueness of any encounter and moment of life. Alphabetism classifies all, even words—calculates all, without excluding language; it wants to immortalize things by freezing even life. It is only dying in every instant that makes resurrection possible, making new every moment and therefore allowing to begin again—an essential condition for forgiveness. Without forgiving and being forgiven, one cannot live. Alphabetism is useful, but it entails the risk of freezing life by storing it into an uncertain future (I have hundreds of books "waiting" to be read!).

We have lost to a large extent the habit to listen attentively as if it were the first and the last time. All too often we listen half attentively because we already know it, having read it or hoping to read it "later on." Is it so unbelievable that Elizabeth, Mary, or anyone for that matter should have spontaneously improvised their songs? The real moments are unrepeatable, unique, sacred. We are now accustomed to look for words in the dictionary, catalogued and frozen. Even "la presencia y la figura" (John of the Cross) can be reproduced, "made," even through virtual images in a way that we cannot distinguish them from the real ones, perhaps because virtuality has supplanted the reality, the *res*, that is to say, the word. *Dabar* (word) in Hebrew means also "event." There is no more need of masters because we have books and also videos. The counsel ceases to be a gift of the Holy Spirit to become psychology encapsulated in books—useful (I repeat) and with pragmatic value. The word is no more sacrament, and if a promise is not written, it is not taken into account, it does not "count." Our language betrays us.

Alphabetism uses words as signs, and often the signs as algorithms tied to mathematical operations. In other occasions I have spoken of the cultural genocides of the alphabetized civilizations. To call today someone an alphabeth is an insult.

What I am caricaturizing is complex, and I am not trying to denigrate Scripture. (What am I doing now if not writing? Although I am convinced that I have said the best of my life in thousands of liturgies and conferences, and not in the pages I have written.) Yet true Scripture is written with blood, and real words can incarnate themselves also in Scripture. We need to recapture the hospitality of the word, to receive the word as a host, to know how to receive by listening, and through listening inspiring also the speaker. The mere presence of a sage makes it often difficult to speak non-sense.

The most excellent way of teaching, says Thomas Aquinas, is not writing but speaking. Real speaking "imprints" into the hearts of the listeners. Christ spoke and did not write. If we reduce *kerygma* to doctrine, we not only devitalize doctrine (reducing it to concepts) and degrade the *kerygma* (which is corporal proclamation), but we also automatically eliminate the interpersonal experience necessary for faith, paraphrasing St. Paul. We are worried about "artificial intelligence" and we are stumbling in artificial love.

This is something suggested by St. Thomas in a third reason adduced by him why Jesus did not write. If Christ had written his "catechism" in a way in which *eius doctrina immediate ad omnes pervenisset*, there would have been no place for human interaction, for personal transmission, for communitarian knowledge, and for the co-creation of tradition. Everyone with earphones and in isolated cubicula would be able to hear the *recorded tapes* of Christ. We would not need one another. Any encounter with the other changes not only ourselves but also the other. The symbiosis is mutual. For some reason Paul spoke about the abolition of the Law. Not all is exegesis, as sometimes learned pundits want us to believe. There is also creation and newness. Christ did not write because he wanted continuing speaking in and through us.

We are told that the mystic does not speak. This is what the very word suggests. This is why mysticism, silence alone is not enough. Out of the Silence of the Father comes the Word of the Son, knew already the Greek Fathers of the church. But we need the Spirit to allow the Word to become incarnated in us.

The burden of my tale is this. It is not for us to say what the Christian language in the coming millennium shall be. I only wanted to say that it should not be a mere echo, but a living and surprising new Word—every day. *Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat!*

2

TRADITION

Tradition is generally taken to mean the working presence of the past, the active transmission of "that which was there"[1] to the present time, that in its turn has been shaped by tradition itself. Strictly speaking, however, it refers to a past that through the "stratifications" of history has slipped into the present and left its mark on it. Culture is crystallized tradition. Even more strictly speaking, tradition is the very presence of those active forces that are able, through the critical judgment of the Spirit, to shape both present and future. Without tradition, the past would be merely "past."

The customary vehicle of tradition is language. Even had the apostles never written anything—as Irenaeus said in the year 200 CE or so—in order to lead a Christian life it would have been enough to follow the *ordo traditionis*, the chain of tradition, which left to the community (*Adversus Haereses* III.4.1). Even those peoples, he added, whose cultures were wholly oral would have been able to keep the transmission of faith, because the Holy Spirit could anyway speak to their hearts (ibid., III.4.2). Tradition must literally be "transmitted," forwarded, but at the same time, it must transmit more than just letters. Without tradition, word would be only letter—and "the letter kills" (2 Cor 3:6).

Tradition presupposes that the passing on is done by people, without which it would be no more than the delivery of dead materials (cf. Acts 8:30–31). Likewise, Christians recognize in Jesus the "faithful witness" (Rev 1:5) who passes on not just something, but himself. By giving himself, he becomes the mediator and "translator" of the divine Mystery.

In this interpersonal dimension, therefore, the sense of the teaching and the function of the *guru* or teacher also take root. In this lies their responsibility and authority—an awkward task, since the teacher must transmit the tradition without delivering it as a truth to be "bought without seeing." True tradition is a living process. This is why Thomas Aquinas emphasizes that, like other great figures of the past such as Pythagoras and Socrates—he probably did not know Buddha—Jesus left no written teachings: his aim was to reach Men's hearts directly (*Summa theol.*, III, q. 42, a. 4). Providence contributed to this as, basically, not even one original word of Jesus remains, and the "Scripture" itself is a translation/tradition. In the Christian confession of faith, Jesus is the Christ precisely because he does not speak for himself but simply lets us hear what he hears from God the Father—as it has been reflected especially in the Gospel of John.

"The organ of tradition is language" (Friedrich Schiller); originally, however, language was always spoken tongue. The current crisis of tradition is therefore related to the fact that in our modern age the vital nature of all Reality has been forgotten. Tradition, as a bridge and mediator between past and present, represents one of the basic historic categories of

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[1] (*Translator's note:* In the original German text the term is *Dagewesen*, i.e., the past-tense form of the well-known Heideggerian *Dasein* [being-there]).

philosophy. In the West, up until the Renaissance there was a certain harmony between the spoken and the written word, because tradition was recognized as having special authority; then, from the period of the Enlightenment onward, there developed an often incompatible dialectic between tradition and reason, authority and liberty.

In religion, tradition plays a special role. Without it, in fact, religion would be no more than an exegesis of a more or less ancient book, or an interpretation of the actions and traces left by a founder, that is, the memorial of an initial event. Paradoxically, however, it is tradition that, in making the past present, keeps religion from falling into mere archaeology (a misconception fueled by some theologians). It is tradition that allows the religious experience, since every experience is consciously lived within a context—and this context is conveyed by tradition.

Without tradition there would be no historical continuity. This continuity, however, must be a living presence, not merely written, as we have been inclined to believe since Gutenberg. The *sola Scriptura* does not shape any tradition; in fact, this Lutheran principle does not refer to a closed book but to a living interpretation—or, more precisely, to an obedience (*ob-audire*) of faith, a living listening to the proclaimed Word. Faith "comes from hearing" (Rom 10:17). The divine word, the revelation, is fulfilled in the consonance between the outer and the inner word, between *kerygma* and enlightenment: both are the work of the Holy Spirit. The expression "religion of the Book" should be changed into "religion of the Word"—the word that is heard and is living—where hearing is not merely a biological process but an ever-evolving human appeal. The *Vedas* can either be simply *Vedas* or a true revelation, if they "speak" to us, if they "co-respond" to us.[2]

Tradition, therefore, always indicates, in name and in deed, a creative and communicative set of things that have been handed down within a "telling" community. To be sure, any tradition is fragile and corruptible—the Latin word *traditio* in fact meaning *both* transmission *and* treason—and every Eucharist, every liturgy being celebrated "in the night in which he was betrayed." In the different religions, the history of interpretation is marked by constant efforts to self-correct, complete, and clarify. The Christian world, in particular, is marked by this awareness of the mystery of tradition of faith and its truth—a tradition that is, at once, divinely reliable and humanly fragile. Those who, "in the name of Tradition," would have tradition simply "reaffirmed" and established as an absolute standard fail to take into account this "traitor" aspect of any human tradition, in which, then, the mystery of the faithfulness and absolute reliability of God becomes even more evident.

In other words, religion without faith is just lifeless scaffolding. A life of faith, however, needs to be realized at a personal level. The saving faith is not merely confidence in the faith of others, though they may even be apostles. Faith, in a Christian sense, is faith in Christ who still lives today (Heb 13:8). This *today* is transmitted by tradition—and tradition, in Christianity, is preserved through the church. *Within* the "community in continuity" of believers, the action of the Trinitarian God, the "threefold harmony of Reality," shows and reveals itself. In the midst of human unfaithfulness does God's faithfulness shine, and in the very abyss of Man the Mystery of God's creating love reveals itself, embodied in Jesus Christ and in the community of those who are the least of his brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:31–36).

Yet *what* is handed down? The answer must be categorical: certainly not a teaching in the sense of a doctrine. What the Christian tradition hands down is Jesus Christ: "in him, with him and through him" God will be "all in all."

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[2] (*Translator's note:* with a pun in German, *an-sprechen*).

"*How* will this be?" (Lk 1:34). Again, the answer to this decisive question is categorical: through faith! Tradition does not hand down faith, but it enables a conscious fulfillment of the free act of faith. Tradition allows a free and conscious *re-en-actment* of the Christian Mystery, that is, of Christ.

In the light of this Mystery the discernment of the spirits is made possible, thanks to and through the transmission of faith within the community. By the power of the Holy Spirit and in the light of the faith in Him we are able to distinguish, among all that is handed down, which traditions correspond to and serve the Mystery of God and which are the work of Man and, therefore, may even contradict the "divine institutions" or cloud them (cf. Mk 7:5–9; Mt 15:2). Tradition, like history, is not an absolute dimension; yet both are essential to us, until God manifests himself and is radically "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

Like any religious revelation, the Christian revelation does not reveal some secret teachings, but it consists in bringing into the light the Mystery, in a Christian sense: the Mystery of God become Man become known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 Jn 3:2–3). All authentic tradition is the reflection, resonance, and manifestation of this divine Reality, which is experienced in faith, hope, and love.

3

THE THREEFOLD LINGUISTIC INTRASUBJECTIVITY

Cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum

1 Cor 13:12

Any awareness is intersubjective, because any awareness is a certain sort of relationship. This relationship is mutual. It affects both the knower and the known—otherwise the known could not modify the knower and knowledge would not take place. Any awareness occurs thus between at least two subjects even if we call one of them "object" because we figure out that we, the *subiectum*, "throw" it (*obiectum*) in front of us. Further, any awareness needs a space in which to happen. It needs context. It happens within a certain horizon. It is situated. It does not occur *in vacuo*. We have then three elements in any act of awareness: the knower, the known, and the knowledge. It is this latter that makes the knower and the known to be such. Without actual knowledge there is neither knower nor known. Knowledge implies distance between the knower and the known and, at the same time, the overcoming of it.

The act of awareness opens us to Reality. In and through awareness we enter into contact with, know, grasp, Reality. Now, this awareness is not only of epistemological nature. It represents and reflects Reality—refractions and illusions notwithstanding. There are three forms of awareness. Language reveals to us this threefold form. Grammarians call it rightly the three persons: the first, the second, and the third, in all the possible numbers and genders. We have here the intersubjectivity of the three persons. Reduced to the simplest form this threefold relationship can be expressed by the formulae: "I am," "Thou art," and "It is" (including all numbers and genders).

Each of these three forms has not only a proper epistemological status but also an *ontological* one. Each of them represents a different and irreducible mode of reality. The confusion of these three forms has played havoc in many a culture, especially in the modern "scientific" *culture* dominated by the one single paradigm of the "third person." My contention is that we cannot reduce all of our human experience to one of those single schemes of intelligibility, nor to one single sphere of the real. At the same time the distinction between the three should not entail separation. In each form of awareness the other two are also present. Reality itself cannot be divided into three areas. There is an interpenetration of the three. For clarity's sake I shall describe the three paradigms (scientific, poetic, and epistemological) before drawing a conclusion.

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The Scientific Paradigm

The *scientific* paradigm can be reduced to the formula "S is P." Modern science is concerned with finding the appropriate P that fits into the delimited S. The fundamental question is, "What *is* this?" The adequate answer is couched in the form, "This *is* P."

Undoubtedly the "is" does not need to be metaphysical. It does not need to tell us what the essence of the "this" is. It suffices that it tells us what the behavior, the movement, the effects, or the appearance of the "this" are. This table is a particularly shaped piece of wood. Wood is an organic substance made of some macro-molecules. Molecules are a cluster of specifically combined atoms. An atom is an aggregate of elementary particles laden with particular energies. Energy is a kind of force capable of giving some velocity to a given mass. Mass is "a" body that offers a certain resistance to acceleration. Acceleration is a change in the speed of mass. Speed is the measure of movement. Movement is a change in the distance between bodies. Distance is that which is not a body between two bodies. Body is a sort of continuous extension. Extension is a form of space. Space is . . . ; we may leave that to Kant, to Newton, to Aristotle, Einstein, or simply cut the philosophical disquisitions short by saying that space is an immediate datum, a given in whatever form. So modern science will proceed.

In a word, the "is" can hardly be the *what*, and is effectively reduced to the *how: how* the "this" relates to, functions *in*, or derives from *another given* until we do not ask further.[1] Until we do not cease questioning there is a philosophy.[2] But when do we cease questioning, that is, when do we reach the Unquestionable? Theoretically speaking, never, for we can always go on questioning. We can never reach the Unquestionable. We only reach the Unquestioned—when de facto, existentially, we simply do not question any longer. The Unquestioned is the myth in which we live.

To be sure, modern science, after Heisenberg, will tell us that the determination of the "is" somewhat depends on the observer measuring what that "thing" is. The "is," therefore, is not totally independent from the observer for whom the thing "is." The observer will have to use a particular light, wavelength, or a particular meter for the measurement. But that *metron* is, in its turn, affected with a similar indeterminacy. And, in the last instance, it has to reach some (human) consciousness. This opens a door for a certain overcoming of pure objectivity: The "S is P" means exactly:

"I say (measure, believe, assert) S is P."

And any other person will have either to re-enact for herself, "I say S is P," or trust the first speaker and take the statement to mean:

"I accept your saying that S is P."

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[1] I cannot resist the temptation to quote from four traditions (I have commented upon them elsewhere): "O Gārgī, do not question too much, otherwise your head will fall off. . . . O Gārgī, do not over-question" (*BU* III.6). "Why do you ask my name?" ("How can you ask my name?" [Judg 13:18 NEB]); "This question, Rādha, goes too far. You can grasp no limit to this question" (*Saṃyutta nikāya* III.189 [*Khandha vagga* II.1]); "Vuolsi cosí colà dove si puote / ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare" (Dante, *Inferno*, 3.95–96). Cf. also 5.23–24. We have to stop somewhere.

[2] Cf. Heidegger's view that philosophy can be understood as the "free questioning of human existence relying upon itself" [als das freie Fragen des rein auf sich gestellten Daseins verstanden werden kann], in *Phänomenologie und Theologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1970), 31. If one does not just understand questioning as "the piety of thought" (M. Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [Pfullingen: Neske, 1954], 1:36), but as the basic structure of finite consciousness, as an expression of the constitutive openness of existence, then we would have, perhaps, a point of connection for an intercultural conception of philosophy.

At any rate my "I" which measures the "S is P," has to be brought into relation with any other "I" if we want to give to "S is P" a univocal and intelligible meaning. We both trust that "S is P" means the same for both of us. In the macrocosmic field and for practical purposes this may suffice, but we cannot avoid an intermediate factor and an underlying relation of intersubjectivity even in the most "objective" scientific statement.

"S is P" then means,

"We say (believe, assert . . .) that S is P."

We may still generalize and say "S is P."

"S is P to any observer for whom S is S and P is P as we understand S and P to be," and we assume S to be S and P to be P for everybody and the "S is P" to be equally patent. "S is P" then means,

"When your S is my S, and your P is my P, then we can make the statement S is P."

There is more. If we are attentive to what some scientists are recently saying, we have to discard pure objectivity in a still more radical way. I am thinking of David Bohm's *Implicate Order*, Karl Pribram's *Holographic Paradigm*, Rupert Sheldrake's *New Science of Life*, Fritjof Capra's *Turning Point*, and many others.[3] In its most extreme form, it comes to this: In any elementary particle is encoded the destiny of the entire universe. Each cell "contains" the whole organism. Each individual is the whole of humankind. Each person "is" the entire cosmos. All "is" implied *in* all. The purely objective scheme collapses. We need for this a new epistemology. The microcosm/macrocosm theory of the ancients, the *specular* character of the universe of the medieval authors, the *ātman* intuition of the Upanishadic thinkers, the Daoist view of Reality, and so on, are *close* to this vision, although a convincing cosmology for our *times* is still to be worked out.

"S is P," even in this most extreme case applied to the smallest and most insignificant thing, tells us the nature of the universe. The S purports to embrace all subjects and the P all predicates. *This* is the scientific paradigm. But this paradigm is far from being purely objective.

The complete formula "S is P" says even more than "I say that S is P." It says this to somebody, to a you. The complete formula is thus, "I say to you that S is P."

This *you* may be another part of myself converted into you. To use the above-mentioned threefold structure, the unabbreviated statement is: "I *am* saying that you *are* conscious of it, that is, that S *is* P." All the persons are involved. There is no pure objectivity.

Now, this is not all. S can represent all subjects and P all predicates.

More: the "is" may be all that there "is." But still the [you] *are* and the *am* remain uncomprehended by the *is*.

The Poetic Paradigm

If science operates in the realm of the first paradigm ("S is P"), the *poetic* paradigm is represented by "thou art." The "art" is irreducible to the "is." The scientist, at least the modern-classical scientist, wants to tell us what the world "is." The poet, on the other hand, reveals the "thou art." By poet, I mean, of course, the artist, the person who makes something: a poem, a painting, a house, a story, a geometrical theorem, a creation . . . as an expression (revelation, creation, extension . . .) of oneself.

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[3] Cf. D. Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); K. Pribram, *Languages of the Brain* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971); R. Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Formative Causation* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1981); F. Capra, *The Turning Point* (New York: Bantam, 1982).

"Poi chi pinge figura,
Se non può esser lei, non la può pore"

says Dante,[4] expressing in the West the artistic dogma of the East: the identification with the "object" not as an it but as a *thou (tat tvam asi)*.[5] Poetry is the actual interpenetration between Man and Nature. The thou is the mediator. The concern of the artist is not to tell us what beauty *is*, what an idea *is*, what a fish *is*, what the sun *is*, what a house *is*. The poet depicts, describes, makes, even thinks, and eventually creates that "you are"—the *you* that you (also) are. This "you" may be susceptible of many interpretations indeed. The poet does not say this *is* love, but "you *are* love, loving, lovable."

The artist does not say, "This *is* an idea, a tree, a pot, a house." The work of art is neither a replica nor a photography of "nature." The artistic work conveys even more that "this *is* your idea, your tree, your pot, your house."

The poet says (to the idea, the tree, the pot, the house), "You are an idea, a tree, a pot, a house." Even more, if "speaking" to us then the poet says, "You are something from, for, in, of . . . the idea, the tree, the pot, the house."

We have here another type of relationship. We often express it by saying that we feel in tune, comfortable, that we like it, find it congenial, inspiring, or vice versa. Another world, the world of the *thou*, opens up—and it would be reductionistic to equate the world of the second person with that of the third. Not intelligibility is here paramount, but delight.

If we purely objectify the poetic *factum*, not only will we not have the artistic, aesthetic experience, but we will not even understand what the poet is saying or doing. The artist uses another register of intelligibility than the "S is P." It is the "you are" register. We could use the formula "You are S."

Or should we not call intelligibility the "artistic" grasping of reality because we are grasped by it? The cathartic function of art is precisely that it makes you realize that "you are a subject." It tells something of you. The poet does not speak "about" you in the third person. The artist lets the you, the second person, emerge in her own right as a subject. The craftsperson cannot make abstraction of his or her thou in the created work. The things themselves enter in relationship with you. The "thing in itself" does not belong to the artistic experience. "The thing in you," if at all, would be the main category.

The artist needs literal inspiration. A current, the wind of the Spirit, has to blow through the artist. The inspiration may be coming from a "higher" or "lower" source, but certainly it has to pass through the inner recess of the artist's being and reach a *you*, singular or plural, real or imaginary, a human being or a thing that becomes equally a you. The thou becomes precisely the subject of the "thou art." The artist does not say, "There *is* a thou somewhere," but, "Thou art."

This thou is the clue to understanding what the artist is doing, saying, performing. It is the thou that enjoys the artist's work. The inspiration is also prepared to "understand," to be caught by the artifact as a work of art. Inspiration is always both, active and passive. This inspiration requires a being spoken to. A dream, a person, a thing, or even a mathematical theorem or a geometrical fantasy may speak and let the thou emerge. The artist "creates" in the sense that something new appears, something that was not there. This something is not a logical conclusion. Sometimes what the artist does has not even been considered possible. Often the artist does not even know what it is all about or what will come out of his. His "creation"

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[4] *Convivio* IV.52–53: "he who paints a form, if he cannot become this form, cannot portray it."

[5] *CU* VI.8.7, etc.

is not an act of the *will*; it does not have its ultimate source in the individuality of the artist. There is a flavor of transcendence in any artistic creation. And for this reason it has to land somewhere, in a thou. Art is intersubjectivity by means of things. It is a flow from a subject to another subject.

The most universal example is language. Language is intersubjectivity. Language arises in my speaking to you, my communicating to you, to you. It is such a personalized activity that, if you do not know the particular tongue, there is no language. There is no communication. The language in that case does not say anything; it does not speak. You do not understand anything. I speak to you, the beloved, the friend, the enemy, the people, who obviously speak my own language. Otherwise there is no language. This is why language is an art. It requires inspiration and a partner. We do not speak in isolation and to nobody. At least we speak to ourselves by an act of more or less normal duologue. "The word reconciles the gap between our private thoughts and our public, common acts."[6]

A special case, but not an exception, is the artistic enlivening of things that we have not made. Our partner may be an elephant, a case, a flower, a plant, a stone, a diamond, a river, a mountain, a star, and perhaps even the whole universe.

"Thou art" should not be confused with "*I am* aware that you are P," or with "She *is* aware that you are P."

To recognize that Rilke was a great poet or that the Alhambra is a grandiose palace is not the same as to be "caught" under the spell of, or impressed (*ergriffen*) by, Rilke or the Alhambra. We have here a double process of intersubjectivity: the first is between you and the art object; the second is between you and me by the mediation of the art object, the thing. When I am lecturing on Maragall I am lecturing to my audience on the personal relationship between Maragall, myself, and the public by means of his poetry. I am translating. My lecture is going to be artistically successful if I succeed in withdrawing myself and let the audience experience the poetic force, beauty, words of Maragall. You and the thing are what counts.

We may have landed in the vast realm of hermeneutics, but not of scientific hermeneutics of the type "S is P." There is also a poetic hermeneutic of the type "Thou art me." A certain intimacy is here required in order to understand—to stand under—the spell of the thing (so understood).

"Thou art S" is irreducible to "S is P." It belongs to a different epistemology than that applicable to the latter formula. But it is also irreducible to "*A* tells you: you are S."

A is not the real subject of the artistic experience. *A* may be the artist, the work of art, the aesthetic experience, and so on. "Tells" stands for manifests, reveals, shows, makes known to you, that you are S. *A* is revealing to you something that you are. But as long as you are thinking that *A* tells you something that you are, you have not yet performed the "Thou art" experience in which the thou is the subject. *A* triggers the experience, but *only* when you become the subject, *only* then "Thou art." You can do this only in relationship with an I that does not objectify, reify you, and lets you be you—irreducible to the it, but also to the I.

This makes sense only in a poetic or animistic world. *A* speaks to you, and you experience that *you are* without translating either into "S is P" or "I am S."

We should be very careful here. If this analysis is correct we are aware of the "Thou art" only *post factum*. "You" become aware that a work of art, an injunction, word, God, Man, or whatever spoke to you and *told* you something about yourself, which you then reenact as being yourself, that is, as the "Thou art" experience. "Thou art S" is not "I *am* S," nor "My psyche, my vision, my understanding *is* this or that."

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[6] E. Rosenstock-Huessy, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1963), 1:23.

The "Thou art" *is* the mystery of the listener who *is* not conscious of listening. It is the voice of transcendence—not detectable as such, or it *would* cease to be transcendent. That voice is only understandable once it has spoken, once it is no more, and it has passed away. You cannot say "God speaks to me," "Euclid, Beethoven, Fra Angelica, Calderón moves me," "I am praying." You have to use the past. You remember, you recollect.[7] You only enjoy the fruits. If you listen, pray, enjoy, or understand, you do not reflect upon it in the same act. You can put the "S is P" on a blackboard for others to see. You can speak to or shout at the others or affirm, "I am telling, doing P." You cannot do anything of the sort with the "Thou art." It is pure intimacy.

All along we have been trying to divide and separate what ultimately belongs together. The "is" and the "art" are certainly mutually irreducible, but they are somewhat incomplete without each other. And the same happens with the third person.

The complete formula here encompasses also the three pronouns, although the emphasis *is* different. There is no isolated "Thou art" experience. The *whole* process is, "I *am* realizing that it *is A* (that particular artistic experience) that discloses to me that thou *art.*"

Subjectivity is always intersubjective.

The Epistemological Paradigm

"I am" is the *epistemological* formula expressing the first person and allegedly the purest possible form of subjectivity. If "S is P" is the language of the scientist, and "Thou art" that of the artist, the "I am" is the language of the authentic philosopher or the true mystic, we could add.

Here also, the confusion between the reporting of the experience and the experience itself is fraught with danger. Ultimately there cannot be a Predicate identical to the Subject. "S is P" can be the case, but "I am P" cannot. If I say I am a man, a citizen of the twentieth century, I am certainly saying "I am P." But this P is shared by many others. I am not alone in this. P is not my I. All those predicates are common values. If I, then, utter a proper name—"I am *Gopal*"—nobody will be *able* to understand *it* unless reduced to known and more common parameters that are afterward heaped on me so as to make a concrete picture of me. But even myself uttering, "I am me," is not much different. What is this "me" that "I am"? I am objectifying the *I* into a *me*, although I may have a better knowledge of the *me* than you have of Gopal. Even in such a perfect self-reflection I would then gather the conglomerate of acts of self-consciousness that I can recall and find them expressed in "me." Even imagining a complete self-reflection, I would then be able to say, "I am me," in such a perfect way that it would amount to "I am I." But if the second were identical to the first, I would not be able to be aware of it as a predicate. I would simply become "I am." Now "I am" should not be confused with "I am I," that is, with the conscious act. "I am aware that I am I."

In this latter case I am actually saying two things at the same time: that "I am," and that "I am I."

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[7] Cf. the extraordinary dialogue between Iblis, Satan, and Moses in chapter 6 of Hallāj's *Kitāb at-Tawāsīn.* Says the Prophet: "Do you still remember Him, even now [after the Fall]?" Responds Iblis: "Oh Moses! Pure thought does not need memory. I am called and remembered just as He is called and remembered. His remembrance is my remembrance and my remembrance is His remembrance. How could we be severed if we are always recalled and remembered together?" Cf. L. Massignon, *La passion de Husayn Ibn Mansur Hallaj* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 3:300–344, as reported and commented by A. Bausani in *Liberaci dal Male,* ed. AA VV (Bologna: EMI, 1983), 67–83.

This latter is the reflection on the former. The former "I am" has no predicate, so that if by virtue of an impossible experiment we were to ask for an answer to the meaning of the "I am," we would have to say, "I am nothing," "I am not a predicate," "I am no thing."

If "am" is being understood as existence, or anything we can be conscious of, the "I am"—consciousness would have to say, "I am not," "I am not anything."

Simply "I am," "I am nothing different from the *I am*."

The mystical awareness is aware that we could not say "it is" and "thou art" if there were not an underlying "I am" that (is) not *is*, nor *art*, but (is) *am*. Forced by grammar, and especially by writing, we are obliged to insert in parentheses the "is" of the third person. But properly speaking this is the reductionism we are trying to overcome. Reality *is* in the "is I", *art* in the "Thou art" and *am* in the "I am." The *am* is not, nor the *art*. The *am* is only "am."

If the accusative with all the other oblique cases is the grammatical status of the scientific discourse, the vocative is the proper status of the artistic experience. The mystical experience is the nominative. But the moment we say this, the nominative ceases to be "nominating" and becomes "nominated" (the oblique cases). The I is not conscious of the I, says the *vedanta. Brahman* does not know that it is *brahman*. It is Īśvara that knows to be *brahman*. The reflection, the mirror, the echo, the predicate *is* (may be) the I, but the I *is* not; the I only *am*. The I does not say, "I is I." If at all, it says, "I am I," but the second I which is the I (in this hypothesis), *am*, no longer I. The second I, as best, would be the I of the third person: "I is I." This amounts to saying, "A is A." We have lost track of the I. We all can say, "I suffer," "I think," "I live," "I exist," because the phrases mean, "It is me who suffers, thinks, lives, exists"; there is an ego, of which we are indirectly conscious, that performs all those acts or that is conscious of them.

The mystical awareness will experience "I am" only when it does not think any predicate, only when "I am" *means* nothing, when it has no meaning that could be expressed, reflected upon.

> Not understood by whom it is known;
> Understood by whom it is not known.

says the Upaniṣad.[8] At most the mystical awareness will say, "I am me, I am you, I am it," fully aware that the utterance reveals something of "me, you, it," that is, of the predicate, but does not penetrate into the subject. This is why when the mystics are obliged to speak they sound pantheistic. A subject about which we could speak, be aware of, say something, would cease to be subject and would be converted into object. How can one know the knower? ask the Upaniṣads.[9] If we could know it, by this very fact the knower would be converted into

[8] *Avijñātam vijānatām / vijānatām avijānatam* (KenU II.3). Cf. also *RV* I.164.32; *Dhammapada* V.4 (63); *Dao te Ching*, 38, etc.

[9] Cf. *BU* IV.5.15; *et etiam* II.4.14; III.4.2. Cf. also the sentence of Augustine: "Deus in homine videt, homo in Deo" [God is seen in man, man in God]. Cf. F. Körner, "Deus in homine videt," *Philosophiches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 64 (1956): 166–217. It is perhaps important to quote the passages verbatim. For clarity sake we will break up the composita:

BU II.4.14: *yena-idam saruam vijānati, tam kena vijāniyāt vijñātāram ena kena vijāniyad (iti).* "That with which everything is known, with what can one know it? / With what should one know the knower?"

BU III.4.2:

> Na drster drastāram pasyeh
> na śruter śrotāram śrnuvāh
> na mater mantāram manvithāh

the known. Even admitting a perfect identity between the knower and the known (*noesis noeseos*) this could *only* happen at the price of a monism that would eliminate either the one or the other and by this very fact *eliminate* knowledge altogether. A knower without known is not a knower. A knower without knower is not known. The polarity is constitutive.

My thesis is that the "I am" says *nothing* especial about anything. It is implicit in all sayings and it says the maximum when it utters "I am Thou," that is, when it says *thou*, as in the Christian Trinity, or in the *ahambrahman* of the Upanishadic revelation.

Ultimately, the "I" does not even say "I am." The "am" belongs already to the second person. What the "I" can *say* is "I am thou," a "thou" who is the "thou" of the I, and not its predicate.[10] "He revealed himself threefold," says another sacred text.[11]

To sum up: We have spoken of three persons in *conformity* with current parlance. Properly, we should have spoken of *the* person, which in herself is the set of that triad of relationships, both in the singular, dual, and plural, the feminine, the masculine, and the neuter. The person is the conjugation of all the personal pronouns and there is not the one without the other.

Our conclusion would like to recover the primacy of the whole over the parts and suggest that the very word "intersubjectivity" is misleading because it starts from an epistemological individualism that, once assumed as the starting point, can no longer be "healed."

I am submitting fundamentally three statements.

First, that each of these three human activities emphasizes one particular epistemological method and highlights one particular ontological sphere of Reality.

Second, that distinction should not entail separation and that in each human act is implicated not only the whole of the human activity but of the entire universe.

Third, that, besides the specialization and division of human activities, there is a holistic attitude and a holistic awareness so that the unity of the human *being*—and of Reality—need not be split by knowledge, nor by action, nor by love.

An example of the first assertion is the nature of the theological sciences. To reduce theology to the scheme "S is P" and thus to expect from it an answer exclusively to the question "What or who is God?" will only lead to confusion. The proper locus for God is not "God is" but "God *am*." The Subject *is* not, the Subject *am*.[12]

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na vijñāter vijñātaram vijānatāḥ
esa ta ātmā sarva-antarah

"You cannot see the seer of seeing; / You cannot hear the hearer of hearing; / You cannot think the thinker of thinking; / You cannot know the knower of knowing."

That is the *atman* in you, which resides in everything."

BU IV.5.15:

yena-idam sarvam vijānāti
tam kena vijānyāt
sa esa na-iti na-iti ātmā
. . .
vijñātāram ara kena vijāniyāt

"The person through whom he knows this everything, how he should know him? / He, the *ātman* is not so, and is not so: But how should one know the knower?"

For other texts and their relation to our topic, cf. R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), esp. Part VI, 641–778.

[10] Cf. my little book *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975). Now in Volume VIII of this *Opera Omnia*.

[11] *BU* I.2.3.

[12] Cf. the *asmita* of the *samkhya-yoga* tradition. Cf. *YS* I.17. Literally: "am-ness."

The history of theology in the West, going always in the wake of modern science, is a sad history.

An example of our second assertion could be the present-day scientific efforts at over-coming scientism. Neither can modern science explain the whole universe, nor can science be reduced to purely scientific statements.

An instance of the third assertion is the emerging awareness in some circles that there is a mystical insight or rather participation, or a wisdom that is not split up into compartments. We should take seriously the analyses of the modern sciences and the *insights* of traditional wisdoms. The cross-cultural fertilization rescues also the mystical from the realm of the parapsychological, paranormal, and merely subjective phenomena. We may want different names for these two kinds of phenomena. We may as well say metaphysics instead of mysticism. Both names are heavily loaded.[13] Ultimately this is a political question about words.

In other words, the "S is P" represents the world, the world of objects, of predicates. It is the world of the intellect. The intellect discloses to us the world of the *is*. The "Thou art" stands for the sphere of persons, of human communication. It is the sphere of love. Love discloses to us the sphere of the *art*. The "I am" symbolizes the universe of the Divine, of the ultimate subject, the source of everything. It is the universe of freedom. Freedom discloses to us the universe of the *am*.

In conclusion, pure subjectivity is an abstraction in the human world and an unwarranted metaphysical assumption. There is subjectivity only *in* relation to objectivity and vice versa. But there is more; there is not an I without a Thou, and both are not without the space created by the It. The error of idealistic philosophy was to suppose that the *Ich* is only extrinsically limited by the *Nicht Ich*, forgetting the Thou that is neither I nor Not-I. The relation is not dialectical but dialogical, as I have tried to explain elsewhere.

Solipsism is an error, not only on the individual and relative plane but also on the ulti-mate and absolute level. There is not only Being. Being not only *is*, but also *art* and *am*. The knower remains unknowable, precisely because it is knower, and is irreducible to the known. Knowledge would collapse if the knower and the known would *totally* coalesce. The lover would cease to love if there were not the beloved. The beloved is not such if it is not loved. And love is an empty and scandalously wrong word without the lovers. Knower, known, knowledge; lover, loved, love; the I, the Thou, the It. The three belong together.

If this thesis is right, the consequences are far-reaching.

First of all, a monotheistic and absolute pure Consciousness would collapse. There has to be a primordial relationship at the very core of Reality.

Second, the Unity of Knowledge and with that of human life should not be sought in the sum total of the specialized intellectual disciplines, scientific or otherwise, but would belong to a different universe of discourse. Wisdom is not a synthesis of the different analytic branches of human knowledge but implies a different epistemology and, more important, a holistic attitude in which theory and praxis are not divorced.

Third, the starting point for such a wisdom is neither the empirical more or less individu-alistic method, nor the a priori more or less solipsistic approach, but the New Innocence of a cosmic solidarity in which all dichotomies are overcome without falling into self-defeating monisms, and Trinity, Advaita, Polarity are names full of risk and of promise.

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[13] "By 'metaphysics' we do not mean a special field or branch within philosophy because philosophy itself is not a field. Something like a division of labor is senseless in philosophy" (M. Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?* trans. W. E. Barton and V. Deutsch [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967], 3).

Glossary

All terms are Sanskrit or English unless otherwise specified

advaita: non-dualism (*a-dvaita*). Spiritual intuition that sees ultimate reality as neither monistic nor dualistic. The recognition that the merely quantitative problem of the one and the many in dialectical reasoning does not apply to the realm of ultimate reality. The latter, in fact, possesses polarities that cannot be divided into multiple separate units; not to be confused with monism.

agnihotra: the daily fire sacrifice performed morning and evening in all homes of the high castes, which consists in an oblation of milk sprinkled on the fire.

aham: "I," first-person pronoun. *Aham* as ontological principle of existence is generally distinguished from *ahaṃkāra* as a psychological principle.

aliud (Lat.): the other, neutral.

alius (Lat.): the other (other I).

anātmavāda, nairātmyavāda: mainly Buddhist doctrine of the insubstantiality of the *ātman* or Self.

ātman: principle of life, breath, the body, the Self (from the root *an*, to breathe). Refers to the whole, undivided person and also to the innermost center of man, his incorruptible nucleus, which in the Upanishad is shown to be identical to Brahman. The Self or inner essence of the universe and man. Ontological center in Hinduism, which is negated in Buddhism.

avatāra: "descent" of the divine (from *ava-tṛ*, descend), the "incarnations" of Viṣṇu in various animal and human forms. Traditionally, there are ten *avatāra*: *matsya* (the fish), *kūrma* (the tortoise), *varāha* (the wild boar), *narasiṃha* (the lion-man), *vāmana* (the dwarf), Paraśurāma (Rāma with the axe), Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, and Kalkin at the end of time. In general, any personal manifestation of the Divinity, descended into this world in human form; descent as antonomasia.

āyus: vital force, vitality, life, temporal existence, the length of life granted to man. Cf. Gr. *aiōn*, aeons.

Bhagavad-gītā: The "Song of the Glorious Lord," the "Song of the Sublime One," a famous ancient Indian didactic poem included in the *Mahābhārata* (often called the "New Testament of Hinduism"), the most well-known sacred book in India.

Bhakti: devotion, submission, love for God, personal relationship with God, devotional mysticism. One of the paths of salvation through union with the divinity.

brahman: prayer, sacrifice, the inherent power in sacrifice; the Absolute, the ultimate reason underlying all things; in the Upanishad it is identified with the immanent Self (*ātman*). Also, one of the four priests who perform the sacrifice or the clergy in general.

cosmotheandric: the nonseparation between World, God, and Man.

dabar (Heb.): word.

diachronic: that which extends through time.

diatopic: that which extends through space.

diatopic hermeneutic: the effort made to understand others without presuming that they have the same basic self-knowledge as ourselves.

duḥkha: dis-quieted, un-easy, distress, pain, suffering, anguish (lit. "having a poor axle hole," i.e. that which does not turn smoothly), a basic concept in Buddhism and Hinduism. Opposite of *sukha*.

dynamis (Gr.): power, energy, capacity.

epektasis (Gr.): dilatation, expansion, extension; man's trust in his divine destiny, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa. Hope.

epistēmē (Gr.): science.

fanum (Lat.): temple, sanctuary. Cf. *pro-fanum*.

fides quaerens intellectum (Lat.): "faith seeking understanding."

fuga mundi (Lat.): escape from the world, an attitude indicating a departure from the things of the world to focus on a world beyond that is considered the "true" world.

Gautama: family name of Prince Siddhartha, who became the Buddha, which means "awakened."

homeomorphism: theory used in comparative religion to discover functional equivalence in two or more religions.

Indra: the great divine warrior who wins all battles in favor of his worshippers, both against opposing clans (*dasyu* or *dāsa*) and against demons such as Vṛtra and Vala. His virile power is irresistible and is the *soma* that provides him with the energy needed for his mighty exploits. He is the liberator of the compelling forces; he releases the waters and the light. His weapon is the *vajra*, the lightning bolt.

Īśvara, Īśa: the Lord, from the root *īś-*, to be lord, to guide, to possess. Although a generic term for Lord, in posterior religious systems it is more often used for Śiva than for Viṣṇu. In the Vedanta it is the manifested, qualified (*saguṇa*) aspect of Brahman.

karma or *karman*: "act, deed, action," from the root *kṛ*, to act, to do; originally the sacred action, sacrifice, rite, later also moral act. The result of all actions and deeds according to the law of *karman* that regulates actions and their results in the universe. Later also connected with rebirth, it indicates the link between the actions carried out by a subject and his destiny in the cycle of deaths and rebirths.

katachronism: interpretation of a reality or doctrine with categories that are extraneous or posterior.

kenōsis (Gr.): annihilation, emptying of oneself, overcoming of one's *ego*.

Kṛṣṇa: *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (lit. "the black one"), and one of the most popular gods. He does not appear in the Vedas, but he is the revealer of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the divine child and the shepherd God of *Vṛndāvana*, the incarnation of love and the playful god par excellence.

logos (Gr.): word, thought, judgment, reason. In the New Testament, Christ is the Word of God (Jn 1).

mahāvākya: "great saying." Refers to great expressions of the Upanishad that express very concisely the content of the experience of the Absolute.

Mahāyāna: "great vehicle." Branch of Buddhism established in India two thousand years ago.

manas: mind in its broadest sense, heart, intellect, the internal organ that is the seat of thought, comprehension, feeling, imagination, and will.

mantra: prayer, sacred formula (from the root *man-*, to think), sacred word, a Vedic text or verse. Usually only the part of the Vedas consisting of the *Saṃhitā* is called a *mantra*. As it is a word of power it may also take the meaning of magic formula or spell.

māyā: the mysterious power, wisdom, or ability of the Gods, hence the power of deceit, of illusion. In the Vedanta it is used as a synonym of ignorance and also to indicate the cosmic "illusion" that shrouds the absolute Brahman.

metanoia (Gr.): transformation, change of mentality or heart, conversion; going beyond (*meta*) the mental or rational (*nous*).

morphē (Gr.): figure, form, apparition.

mythos (Gr.): the horizon of presence that does not require further inquiry.

nirvāṇa (Gr.): lit. "the going out (of the flame)," extinction. The word does not refer to a condition, but indicates liberation from all dichotomy and conditioning, whether it be birth and death, time and space, being and non-being, ignorance and knowledge, or final extinction including time, space, and being; the ultimate destination for Buddhism and Jainism.

noēma (Gr.): in the phenomenology of Husserl, the unit of intellectual perception.

nomos (Gr.): custom, rule, law.

nous (Gr.): mind, thought, intellect, reason.

ob-audire (Lat.): to listen, to obey.

ontonomy: intrinsic connection of an entity in relation to the totality of Being, the constitutive order (*nomos*) of every being as Being (*on*), harmony that allows the interdependence of all things.

paṇḍit: erudite.

pāramārthika: ultimate level, ultimate reality, true reality.

pars pro toto (Lat.): the part that represents the whole.

perichōrēsis (Gr.): notion of the early Church Trinitarian doctrine describing the interpenetration of divine persons. Corresponds to the Latin *circumincessio*.

phainomenon (Gr.): phenomenon, that which appears, that which shows itself.

pisteuma (Gr.): from *pisteuō*, to believe; that which the believer believes, the intentional sense of religious phenomena, the homeomorphic equivalent of *noema*.

Prajāpati: "Lord of creatures," the primordial God, Father of the Gods and all beings. His position is central in the *Brāhmaṇa*.

pratītyasamutpāda: Buddhist doctrine of the "conditioned genesis" or "dependent origination," which claims that nothing exists for itself but carries within itself the conditions for its own existence, and that everything is mutually conditioned in the cycle of existence.

primum analogatum (Lat.): the point of reference for every analogy.

pro-fanum (Lat.): pro-fane, outside the temple (*fanum*).

psychē (Gr.): soul, psyche, heart, animated being.

Puruṣa: the Person, the spirit, man. Both the primordial man of the cosmic dimension (Rig Veda) and the "inner man," the spiritual person existing within man (Upanishad). In the *Sāṃkhya* it is the spiritual principle of reality.

Rāmāyaṇa: Indian epic poem.

Rig Veda: the most ancient and important of the *Veda* texts.

ṛṣi: seer, sage, wise man; the poet-sages to whom the *Veda* were revealed. Regarded as a special class of beings, superior to men and inferior to the Gods. According to one tradition there were seven *ṛṣi*, probably the seven priests with whom Manu performed the first sacrifice and the seven poet judges in the assembly. Their identification with the names of ancient seers and with the stars of the Ursa Major occurred later (*Brāhmaṇa*).

ṛta: cosmic and sacred order, sacrifice as a universal law, also truth; the ultimate, dynamic and harmonious structure of reality.

śabda-brahman: Brahman as sound, the revealed aspect of Brahman.

śaivasiddhānta: religion, philosophical/religious school pertaining to Hinduism; dominant Śivaism in Tamil Nadu.

śakti: energy, potency, divine power, the creative energy of God. The active, dynamic—feminine—aspect of reality or of a God (generally of Śiva). Personified as the goddess Śakti, consort of Śiva with a creative function.

saṃgha: the (monastic) community of those who follow the path of the Buddha.

saṃsāra: the impermanent phenomenic world and the condition of identification with it, the temporal existence, the cycle of births and deaths, of conditioned existences; state of dependence and slavery.

Śaṅkara: eighth-century Hindu philosopher and teacher; one of the most famous exponents of non-dualist Vedānta.

śrāddha: rite of homage to deceased relatives; offering to ancestors generally made by the son of the deceased and repeated on certain occasions. Consists in oblations of food to the ancestors and a meal for relatives and priests.

śruti: "that which has been heard," the Vedic Revelation, an expression mainly used in sacred texts, *Veda* and other authoritative Hindū Scriptures, which reveal to the human spirit the entire *corpus* of the *Veda* transmitted orally.

śūnya, *śūnyatā*: void, vacuity, nothingness, the structural condition of reality and all things; represents the ultimate reality in Buddhism (cf. *nirvāṇa*).

sūtra: lit. "yarn, thread of a fabric." Short aphorism in a sacred text that generally cannot be understood without a comment (*bhāṣya*). The literature of the *sūtra* is part of the *smṛti* and is conceived to be easily memorized.

taṇhā (Pāli): thirst; thirst for existence; origin of all suffering, according to Buddhism. Cf. *tṛṣṇā*.

Tantra: lit. weave, weaving, loom; religious system not based on the *Veda*, consisting of secret doctrines and practices that give access to hidden powers; accentuates the inter-relation between body and soul, matter and spirit; the development of special powers. The Tantric tradition has practically permeated the entire spiritual tradition of Asia. The basic assumption of all Tantric practices is the inter-relation between body and spirit, matter and soul, *bhukti* (pleasure) and *mukti* (liberation).

tat: demonstrative pronoun: "that." Opposite of *idam* (this), refers to Brahman. When isolated it refers to the ultimately reality without naming it.

tat tvam asi: "that is you," an Upanishadic expression meaning that *ātman* is ultimately Brahman. One of the four Great Sayings (*mahāvākyāni*) of the Upanishad, as taught to Śvetaketu.

technē (Gr.): art, ability, handicraft.

theandric: "divine-human" (from Gr. *theos* and *aner*).

tṛṣṇā: thirst; cf. *taṇhā*.

Upanishad: fundamental sacred teaching in the form of texts constituting the end of the *Veda*; part of the revelation (*śruti*) and basis of posterior Hindū thought.

vāc: word; the sacred, primordial and creative Word; sound, also discourse, language, the organ of speech, voice. Sometimes only the Rig Veda and other times all the *Veda* are referred to as *vāc*.

Veda: lit. knowledge (from the root *vid*-, to know); the sacred knowledge incorporated in the *Veda* as the entire body of "Sacred Scriptures" (although originally they were only passed on orally). Strictly speaking, "*Veda*" refers only to the *Saṃhitā* (*Ṛg-veda, Yajur-veda, Sāma-veda, Atharva-veda*); generally, however, *Brāhmaṇa* and Upanishad are also included. In the plural it refers to the four *Veda*.

vedānta: lit. end of the *Veda*, i.e., the Upanishad as the climax of Vedic wisdom. In the sense of Uttaramīmāṃsā or Vedāntavāda, a system of Indian philosophy (Advaita-vedānta, Dvaita-vedānta, etc.) based on the Upanishad, which teaches a spiritual interpretation of the *Veda*; one of the last schools of Hindū philosophical thought, of which the most renowned representatives include Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva.

viator (Lat.): traveler, novice, aspirant, disciple.

Vidyā: knowledge, wisdom, also a branch of knowledge; a section of a text in the Upanishads.

Viṣṇu: important God in Hinduism, featured in the ancient *Veda*; his name means "the all-pervading one." Associated with the sun, he is famous for his three great strides with which he measured the three worlds. He later became the second component of the *trimūrti*, the preserver, and is mainly worshipped in his *avatāra* (cf. *Kṛṣṇa, Rāma*).

viveka: discernment, discrimination.

vyāvahārika: "relating to earthly matters, to mundane life," i.e. the earthly way of seeing, the practical perspective; the relative level.

zen: from the Sanskrit *dhyāna* (deep meditation), tradition of Japanese Buddhism that developed in the thirteenth century (*satori, nirvāṇa*).

INDEX OF ORIGINAL TEXTS IN THIS VOLUME

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About the Author

An international authority on spirituality, the study of religions, and intercultural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar made intercultural and dialogical pluralism one of the hallmarks of his research, becoming a master "bridge builder," tireless in the promotion of dialogue between Western culture and the great Oriental Hindū and Buddhist traditions.

Born in 1918 in Barcelona of a Spanish Catholic mother and an Indian Hindū father, he was part of a plurality of traditions: Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, scientific and humanistic.

Panikkar held degrees in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. He delivered courses and lectures in major European, Indian, and American universities.

A member of the International Institute of Philosophy (Paris), of the permanent Tribunal of the Peoples (Rome), and of the UNESCO Commission for Intercultural Dialogue, he also founded various philosophical journals and intercultural study centers. He held conferences in each of the five continents (including the renowned Gifford Lectures in 1988–1989 on "Trinity and Atheism").

Panikkar received international recognitions including honorary doctorates from the University of the Balearic Islands in 1997, the University of Tübingen in 2004, Urbino in 2005, and Girona in 2008, as well as prizes ranging from the Premio Menéndez Pelayo de Humanidades for his book *El concepto de naturaleza* in Madrid in 1946 to the Premio Nonino 2001 a un maestro del nostro tempo in Italy.

Panikkar lived in Tavertet in the Catalonian mountains, where he continued his contemplative experience and cultural activities from 1982 until his death on August 26, 2010. There he founded and presided over the intercultural study center Vivarium. Panikkar published more than fifty books in various languages and hundreds of articles on the philosophy of religion, theology, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and Indology.

From the dialogue between religions to the peaceful cohabitation of peoples; from reflections on the future of the technological society to major work on political and social intelligence; from the recognition that all interreligious dialogue is based on an intrareligious dialogue to the promotion of open knowledge of other religions, of which he is a mediator; from his penetrating analysis of the crisis in spirituality to the practice of meditation and the rediscovery of his monastic identity; from the invitation of *colligite fragmenta* as a path toward the integration of reality to the proposal of a new innocence, Panikkar embodies a personal journey of fulfillment.

Among his most important publications with Orbis are: *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (1973); *Worship and Secular Man* (1973); *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1981); *The Silence of God* (1989); *The Rhythm of Being* (1989); *Cosmotheandric Experience* (1993); and *Christophany* (2004).